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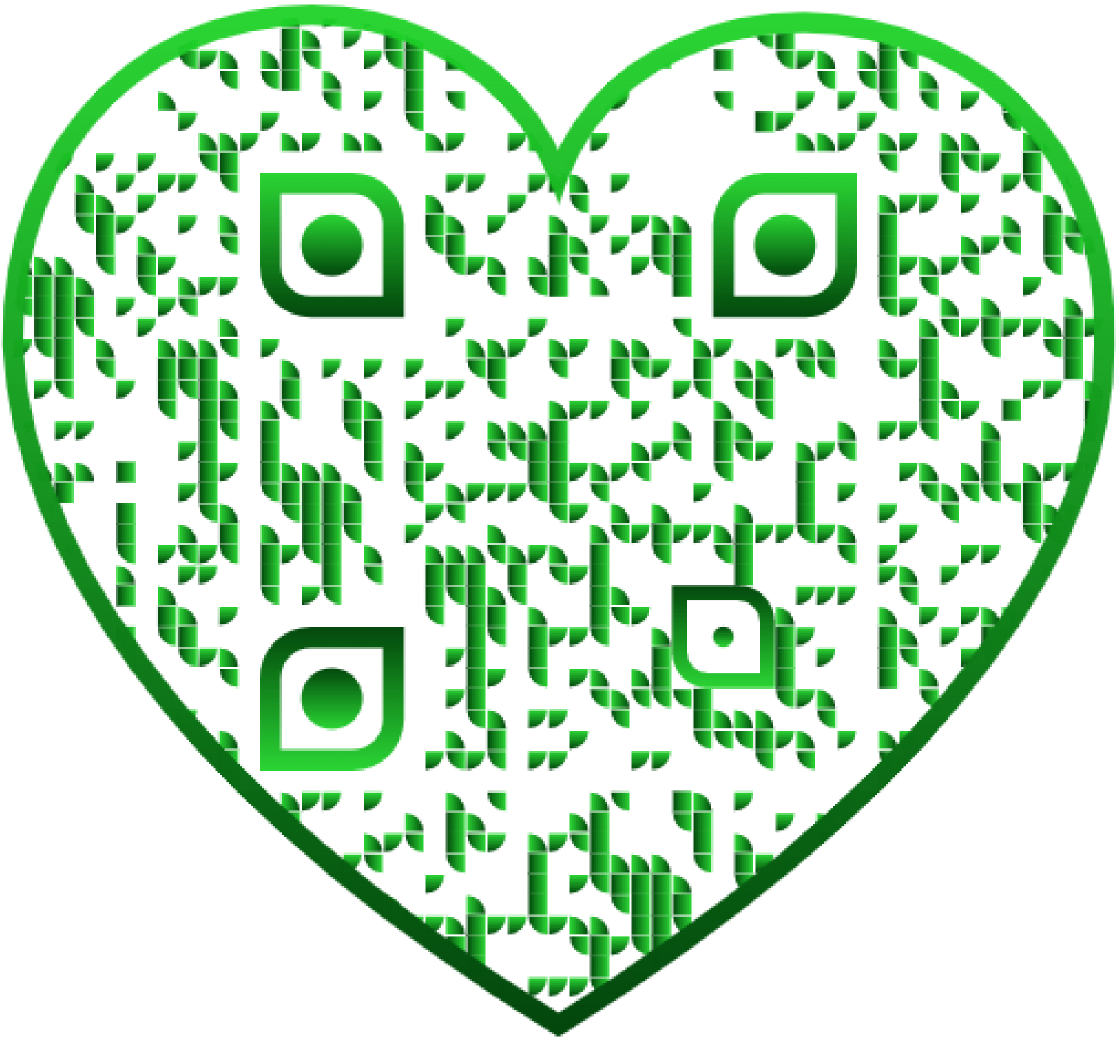

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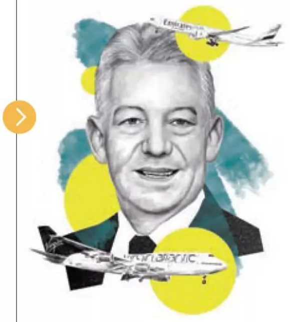

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COVER IMAGE: **COURTESY OF AIR FRANCE, GETTY IMAGES**

EDITOR'S LETTER

WELL, BRITISH AIRWAYS has certainly stirred the pot with its recent loyalty changes, hasn't it? We've got the full breakdown for you on page 14 – and don't miss the reactions from our online forum members on page 9. Let's just say, the feedback has been plentiful… It prompted us to dive into our archives and see how reports of loyalty programmes have changed over the years – head to the back page for more.

On a more positive note, we're also taking a close look at BA's new first class suite, which is set to take flight next year. Turn to page 54 for all the details.

Our stunning cover this month captures the intertwined worlds of fashion and aviation – perfect timing for those attending London Fashion Week. From the iconic glamour of Pan Am flight attendants to the more recent shift towards gender-neutral designs, it's a fascinating look at how fashion has influenced aviation, and vice versa.

If you are visiting London this month, for fashion shows or otherwise, and in need of somewhere with a great business breakfast or a quiet lunch spot – we've got you covered. In fact, our feature on page 56 highlights the best places to wine and dine clients in three different time zones: London, Hong Kong and New York.

We continue exploring the stylish side of travel with reviews of the Hôtel Plaza Athénée and Dior Spa in Paris (page 78), a tour of Belgium's style capital, Antwerp (page 27), and a round-up of luxury travel goodies and experiences (page 34).

Finally, if you're wondering why I'm hanging precariously in this month's photo, turn to page 66, where I recount the highs (and very few lows) of my time in Toronto.

Tamsin Cocks

Tamsin Cocks
Editor

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CLODAGH KINSELLA
Clodagh is a British-Belgian writer and co-author of the Bradt guide to *Flanders: Northern Belgium*. She regularly contributes to publications including *Condé Nast Traveller* and *The Independent*, and broadcasts for BBC Radio 4. Turn to page 27 for her expert guide to Antwerp.

CHRIS DWYER
Chris is a food and travel writer who has been lucky to enjoy many great meals, from humble roadside stalls to Michelin-starred temples. For him, they all celebrate a destination's unique culture and tell a story. On page 30, he outlines new restaurants and trends to try this month.

LAUREL IVES
Laurel is a journalist who's passionate about health, nutrition and mental wellbeing, and has written for outlets from *The Telegraph* to the BBC. In this issue, she rounds up the latest wellness news, from saunas at King's Cross to the new focus on 'healthspan'. Turn to page 32.

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Inbox

Readers share first-hand knowledge, experiences and ideas

PRAISE INDEED

I was delighted with the new look *BT* magazine. The quality paper and high gloss cover have restored the magazine to its former glory. Along with the sleek new logo, the magazine exudes quality.

The editorial content is even better than before, with a range of very informative and interesting features, all with excellent accompanying pictures.

And best of all, the typeface is sufficiently clear to read without the need for glasses!

Well done to the *BT* team for producing a class-leading magazine that I have greatly enjoyed for many years!

Pat Jordan, Dublin

ANNIVERSARY DETOUR

Instead of a cosy dinner or a romantic weekend away for our first anniversary, we were en route to Heathrow as I had to fly to Munich for work. This was not what my girlfriend had in mind. No one wants to spend their anniversary on public transport, let alone going to an airport to say goodbye.

When we finally got there, it was the usual Heathrow chaos: people rushing, kids screaming, and announcements blaring non-stop. Romantic, right?

I head through security, feeling guilty as hell. But then, my flight's delayed by two and a half hours. And suddenly, I get a crazy idea. I whip out my phone, book her a ticket, and call her up. "I bought you a ticket to Heathrow. Come back through security. We're having our anniversary dinner at the airport."

We spent our anniversary eating overpriced airport food like two giddy idiots. It wasn't fancy, but it was perfect in the weirdest way possible. We sat laughing and joking, watching travellers rush by while we had our little moment.

Two and a half hours later, we said our goodbyes (again) and I thought I'd pulled off the most spontaneous, romantic gesture of all time. Then I land in Munich and see a bunch of missed calls from her.

After I left, she headed to border control, where they realised she had a plane ticket but no passport. She ended up spending the next hour and a half trying to explain to airport security that she wasn't planning some wild international escape, she was just some poor woman whose girlfriend impulsively bought her a ticket so they could have dinner in the airport.

Every time our anniversary rolls around, we crack up thinking about it. That day didn't go to plan, but it became *our* story – an anniversary so bizarre, so unexpected, that it couldn't have been more perfect if we'd tried. I wouldn't change a single ridiculous minute of it.

Neshmarie Moroso, London

STAR LETTER

Scotland's Airline
Loganair

Flight heyday

★

Remember in the 80s when you could fly on small planes that looked like private jets and the pilot resembled Tom Cruise? A sign saying just one person at a time on the boarding ladder? The hostess caring for you like you were her best friend and serving you a free tea, half a plastic cup of water and a Tunnock's bar? If you were a regular, they would upgrade you to the emergency aisle for more legroom. Your head was cushioned by a soft tartan head rest. The people opposite you were as happy as you.

I can report that Loganair provides this service from Heathrow to Derry/Londonderry every day on an Embraer 345 jet with capacity for 49 people. Want to fly like the 80s? Fly Loganair. One very happy customer having flown multiple times to Northern Ireland.

Brian Turner, Bracknell

TIMOTHY
LONDON

STAR PRIZE

This month's Star Letter writer will receive a *Business Traveller*-branded Timothy Spirit carry-on case. For your chance to win, email editorial@businesstraveller.com and include your full postal address and phone number. We reserve the right to edit letters.

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FORUM

BA'S EXECUTIVE CLUB REBRAND

CYBERTRAVLLER

Better aspects: Members will earn Tier Points based on the cost of flights and ancillary spend, benefitting those who spend more on premium cabins, seat selection, or excess baggage. High-spending passengers will likely see a faster path to elite status.

Tier Points can be earned on seat selection, excess baggage, and contributions to sustainable aviation fuel (SAF). So, there are more ways to earn beyond just the airfare.

Removing the cap on Tier Points from BA Holidays packages allows for significant accumulation of Tier Points, enabling quicker progression to elite status.

New milestone bonuses (e.g., 2,500, 4,000 and 5,000 bonus Avios) add value to moving between Tiers.

BA American Express Premium Plus cardholders can earn up to 2,500 Tier Points annually through card expenditure, enhancing earning potential for frequent spenders.

Running membership years from April to March simplifies tracking and aligns with benefits.

Worse aspects: Tier Points required for elite status are dramatically increasing (eg Bronze from 300 to 3,500; Gold from 1,500 to 20,000). This will make it much harder for lower-spending travellers to achieve or retain status.

Travellers booking lower-cost fares will find it harder to earn Tier Points due to the spend-based earning model. Previously, Tier Points were awarded based on distance and fare class, which sometimes favoured longer flights regardless of ticket price.

Eligible spend excludes taxes and fees, meaning only base fare and carrier imposed charges count. This reduces earning potential on lower-cost tickets where fees constitute a larger portion of the total fare.

The requirements for Gold Guest List are extremely high, requiring 65,000 Tier Points (with 52,000 from BA-marketed products), while retaining status requires 40,000 Tier Points annually.

All in all, I don't see anything here that would attract me to join this "club". Business travellers who are not paying out of their own pocket could probably get to Gold, but as someone who runs a business, is cost-conscious, and looks for value for money, this would make BA a no-go for me.

NICK PIKE

The current situation whereby LHR T5A lounges are rammed, premium check-in is swamped and everyone is in Group 1, was becoming unsustainable – pretty much all brought on by the BA Holidays double tier point offer. The "How I got BA Gold for £3,000" articles encouraged more of the same. Since one of the major benefits of premium class flying is the absence of crowds, it was all counter intuitive. So I'm in favour of the principle. Those new spend thresholds look pretty racy though and seem to gravitate towards only being available for people in first or business.

'As someone who looks for value for money, this would make BA a no-go for me'

TOP: Opinions are mixed on the reveal of BA's club rebrand

MONTYSAURUS

As a retired person who travels much less but has managed to retain silver status for 30 consecutive years, I'm about to lose that status, which is a significant disappointment.

ANTHONY DUNN

For those of us in varying stages of retirement and who have demonstrated a degree of loyalty to BA through some pretty ropey times, I feel a significant degree of contempt for BA management and at the same time a degree of liberation. I am now looking forward to the status matching offers from Star Alliance and Skyteam members for BAEC Gold and Silver members. I will now routinely compare and contrast BA's offering with others – and will vote with my wallet. This is going to hit them rather than me.

I also wonder whether BA senior management has stopped to ask themselves about the likely reaction from Oneworld partners to this announcement? I am currently planning a trip to Japan in 2025 with BA/CX/JL. If I ditch BAEC and switch to Star Alliance, that is going to impact the likelihood of me choosing one of these other Oneworld carriers.

ALANORTON1

AA already has a revenue-based frequent flyer programme. Much the same as Delta and United Airlines. Not to mention hotel programmes like Marriott Bonvoy and Hilton Honors, which use dynamic pricing.

We may not like what BA have done, but I suspect the premise of rewarding status with spend is here to stay.

AH, MR. BOND

As a 10+ year Silver member, this will surely be my last. A £7,500 spend is going to be unachievable for most. This will also just about obliterate BA's Bronze membership. What is BA trying to achieve? Does it think all these people will stay loyal? All this about "listening to members". It's commercial suicide, unless I'm misreading something? I travel to Asia most years and wonder if I would be better putting my QR Privilege Club number on future bookings?

GOLD-2K

If I read correctly, anyone who has achieved gold for life or GGL for life under the current scheme will retain it.

WAKE-ME-FOR-FOOD

BA will always get money from transatlantic travel. It's interesting what this will do to regional travel. Based in Edinburgh, I can easily make Silver the amount I travel to London. I really want Silver for lounge access (food without getting ripped off at airport prices and a good place to sit). However, there's no chance of achieving this in the new system without premium international

→

Continued from overleaf

travel. It may contribute to sustainability, getting people from Edinburgh to use LNER, or turn people to easyJet. There's no point paying the BA premium if you don't get something in return.

I have some long-hauls over the next few years that will likely make me Bronze at best. It may be that I just go with Qatar Airways, Finnair, or explore KLM. If Bronze gets lounge access then maybe I will keep with it.

SIMONS1

Flying a lot and being a high value customer are different things. Consider that:

1. In most cases, genuine high value customers paying to travel in a premium cabin get their benefits from the fare paid, so don't need a shiny card to get by.
2. Corporates pick BA based on price and availability, and in many cases won't care whether the employee has individual status.
3. Leisure travellers spending £7,500 a year on flights, hotels, cars etc. will make Silver anyway so will still get most benefits.

So who does that leave in the cold? Basically only those who were travelling a lot on cheap fares, doing Tier Point runs to get status for the lowest possible price and the smallest margins for the airline whilst enjoying F&B in the lounges.

There are plenty of the 'I will never fly BA again' types, but I'm sure BA will have no difficulty filling its aircraft. On the other hand, I gave up BA Gold status eight years ago and it's liberating to make travel decisions based on where I want to go and when, rather than being a slave to a travel programme.

RFERGUSON2

Chasing 'status' is frankly a fool's game for my travel needs. When I travel long-haul, I purchase tickets in business class. So 90% of my flights include priority check-in, lounge access etc (the stuff that comes with 'status'). But I found that I was restricting my searches to Oneworld to attain 'status' when I could spend hundreds/thousands less with an (often superior) airline that, by virtue of booking business, would provide the same perks as if I had status with them.

I will miss the First Wing at LHR on my super-short economy trips up and down to MAN. But is it worth £20k a year spend? No chance.

> 'Chasing "status" is frankly a fool's game for my travel needs'

STEVESCOOTS

The only surprising thing is that BA did not do it sooner. Loyalty works both ways and I dare say most Gold Card holders would have flown with someone else if they had a lower cost/similar service alternative. I did when I was BAEC Gold. I was loyal to BA on price only until other Oneworld carriers started to undercut BA on my routes.

ANDREWINHK

These changes will likely also result in some positive environmental impact. The ridiculous chasing of sectors to qualify for status is madness, I follow several travel bloggers who complete nonsensical routings and turn around flights just to maintain status. I wholeheartedly agree that status should be based on spend, it is the only model that makes sense to me. Over time, I am sure all Oneworld carriers will end up aligning to this model, it ends up being the most sensible and profitable for the airlines, and as many have mentioned BA are not a first mover here.

SWISSEXPAT

These changes will likely kill off European-based flyers like me who placed a value on lounge access, priority check-in and an extra bag etc. These "extras" were more for my personal flights (rather than those that would be booked in C/J). I will be Silver until April 2026, after that, I can choose from SWISS and easyJet for short-haul and AF/LH/ Delta etc for long-haul. I expect that there will be thousands who will divert to lower-cost carriers. Having Silver would have been the difference for many to choose a higher cost BA flight over a rival. My expectation would be that Ryanair and easyJet will be delighted by this move.

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HOT TICKET

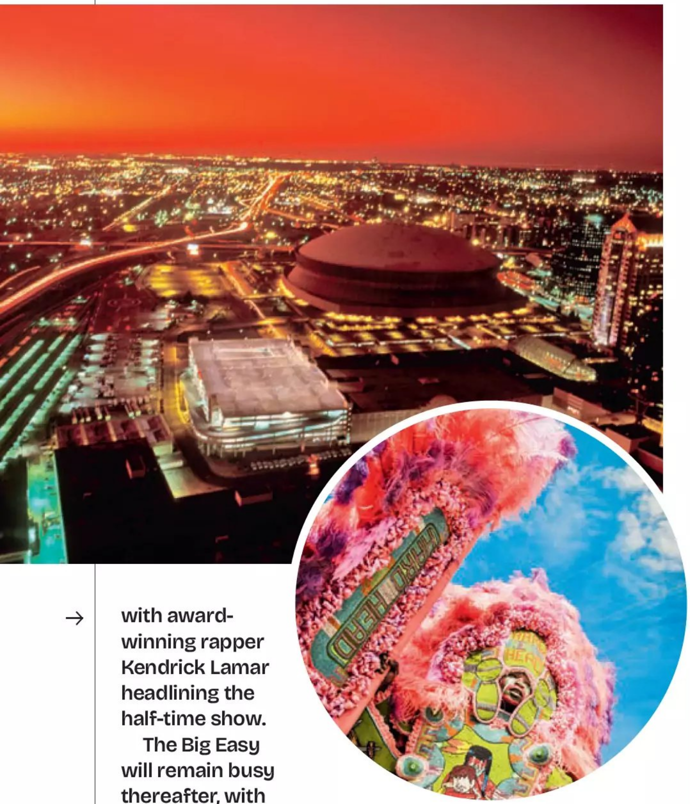
New Orleans

The Super Bowl heads to town ahead of Mardi Gras and carnival celebrations

WORDS **ALICE HENDERSON**

NEW ORLEANS HOSTS the Super Bowl this month – its 11th time taking on the mammoth event. The championship game, held on 9 February at the Caesars Superdome, brings with it a jam-packed programme of events around the city. Expect a Super Bowl Host Committee Parade through the French Quarter (think carnival-style, football-themed floats and marching bands), a food festival at the National World War II Museum and, of course, a thrilling opening event. As with each Super Bowl game, it's not just about American football. Music lovers will also have their moment,

Continued from overleaf



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with award-winning rapper Kendrick Lamar headlining the half-time show.

The Big Easy will remain busy thereafter, with Mardi Gras celebrations well underway by mid-February. 'Krewe' parades will take place all around the city, each with their own history and theme. Look out for Krewe of Barkus on 23 February – true to its name, this parade showcases four-legged friends.

As for hospitality news, Nobu Hotel Caesars New Orleans opened right at the close of 2024, and is housed inside the recently transformed Caesars casino. Spanning two floors, the hotel offers 54 guest rooms, designed with a blend of Japanese and American modernity, and also boasts the namesake Nobu restaurant. Another city newcomer is The Bell – a jaunty, British-inspired pub with lots of tartan and a menu of elevated pub food, just in case you're feeling homesick.

FROM TOP: The Caesars Superdrome, home of the Super Bowl; colourful Mardi Gras floats; a Standard King room at Nobu Hotel Caesars New Orleans

British Airways' loyalty shake-up

British Airways has announced big changes to its loyalty programme for 2025

FROM 1 APRIL, the British Airways Executive Club will rebrand as the British Airways Club, and move to Tier Points earning aligned to the cost of flights. Members will also be able to earn Tier Points on ancillary spend, such as seat selection and excess baggage.

Members will earn a Tier Point for every £1 of eligible spend, and Tier thresholds will be recalculated to reflect the new model. Eligible spend includes the base fare and the Carrier Imposed Charges (YQ and YR), but not non-airline taxes and fees such as Air Passenger Duty.

A total of 3,500 Tier Points will be needed to reach Bronze, rising to 7,500 for Silver and 20,000 for Gold (currently 300, 600 and 1,500 respectively). To attain Gold Guest List, members must earn 65,000 Tier Points, with at least 52,000 of these earned through BA-marketed flights, add-ons and holiday packages. Members will then need to earn 40,000 Tier Points to retain Gold Guest List (with at least 32,000 earned through BA-marketed flights, add-ons and holiday packages).

Customers with bookings for travel after 1 April will be awarded Tier Points "on a conversion of the existing method", and "any existing bookings will earn proportionally the same number of Tier Points, or more, as they would today".

This follows a similar move to align Avios-earning to flight and ancillary expenditure in 2023. Other changes include the ability to earn Tier Points and Avios when purchasing a contribution to Sustainable Aviation Fuels (SAF). Members will be able to earn up to 1,000 Tier Points per year through this and can use Avios to pay for the contribution.

Later in 2025, new "milestone moments" will be introduced between Tiers, with gifts of 2,500, 4,000 and 5,000 bonus Avios awarded between Bronze and Silver Tiers. Expect more benefits in the months ahead. Find out what BT readers think on page 9.

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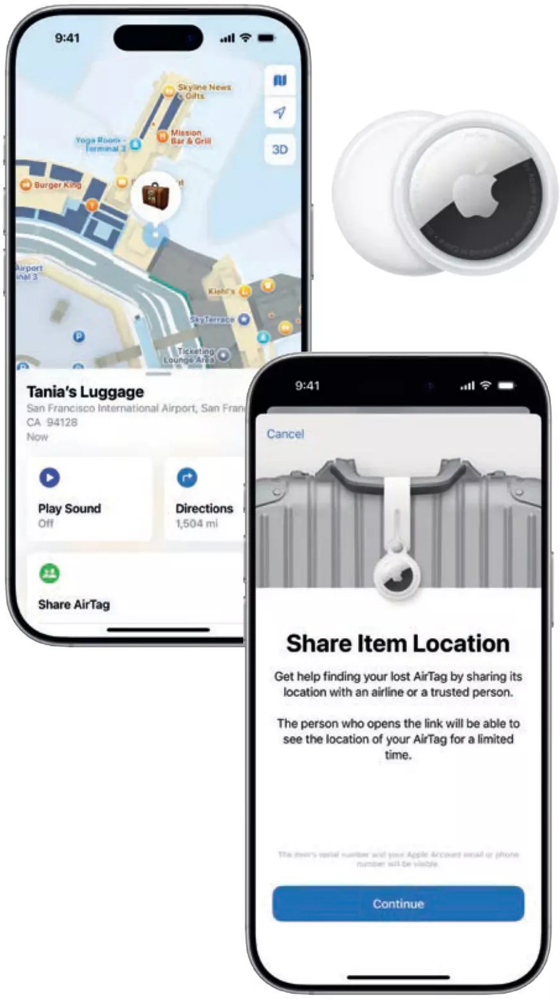
MARK CASWELL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TECHNOLOGY

Lost and found

Airlines allow Apple feature to aid with passengers' smooth baggage recovery

APPLE HAS introduced a new iOS feature called Share Item Location, enabling users to securely share the location of their AirTag or Find My network accessory with airlines.

The technology allows customers to generate a location link for their device, leveraging the Apple Find My network, a crowdsourced network of over one billion Apple devices that use Bluetooth wireless technology to detect missing devices or items nearby.

Apple said that 15 airlines would begin accepting the links in the coming months as part of their process for locating mishandled or delayed bags. These include Aer Lingus, Air Canada, Air New Zealand, Austrian Airlines, British Airways, Brussels Airlines, Delta, Eurowings, Iberia, KLM, Lufthansa, Qantas, Singapore Airlines, SWISS, Turkish Airlines, United Airlines, Virgin Atlantic and Vueling.

Location sharing can be stopped by the customer at any time

The process is end-to-end encrypted and anonymous – meaning that neither Apple nor Find My network accessory manufacturers can view an item's location or details. Apple also stressed that location sharing automatically ends as soon as a customer is reunited with their bag (or after seven days, whichever comes sooner).

NEED TO KNOW
To use the service, customers need to have an Apple device running iOS 18.2, iPadOS 18.2, or macOS 15.2 or later.

ROUTE NEWS

Qatar Airways has resumed flights to Damascus. The airline last served Syria's capital 13 years ago, and is now operating thrice-weekly flights on Mondays, Fridays and Saturdays.

China Airlines has launched flights between the cities of Melbourne and Auckland, with the five-times-weekly route operating as an extension of the carrier's Taipei-Melbourne service.

Juneyao Airlines has launched a thrice-weekly (daily in February) service between Shanghai and Melbourne, operated by the carrier's Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner aircraft.

KLM Cityhopper will launch a new route between Exeter and Amsterdam Schiphol on 30 March, with daily flights being operated by the carrier's 88-seat Embraer 175 aircraft.

WORDS **ENRIQUE PERRELLA**

The flair up there

Airlines upgrade with luxe new business class cabins for 2025

AS THE competition for luxury air travel intensifies, airlines are pushing boundaries to redefine business class comfort and innovation. For business travellers, 2025 promises a range of new and improved business class cabins, offering privacy and technology at new heights. Here are the top five business class products that travellers can expect in the coming year.

EXTRA ROOM

AA'S FLAGSHIP SUITE CAN BE A BED OR A CHAISE LONGUE

ABOVE American Airlines' Flagship Suite

1 AIR NEW ZEALAND
Business Premier and Luxe

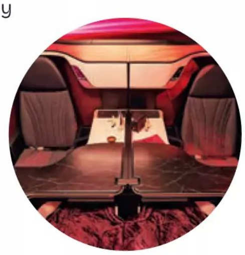
Air New Zealand will introduce its Business Premier and Business Premier Luxe seats on its Boeing 787s in early 2025, offering an all-new product for the airline's five US gateways. The cabin will feature a 1-2-1 herringbone layout with 20.5-inch-wide seats that convert into 80.25-inch flatbeds. They will also include a 24-inch TV screen, USB ports and Bluetooth audio. The Business Premier Luxe seats will offer larger ottomans, sliding doors and spacious tray tables.

2 TURKISH AIRLINES
Crystal Suites

Turkish Airlines is upgrading its business class cabin with Crystal Suites. The new cabin, which features a 1-2-1 configuration for direct aisle access, closing doors for privacy and modern amenities, replaces the outdated 2-3-2 layout that previously forced some business class passengers into middle seats. The seats will be available on retrofitted Boeing 777s and brand-new Airbus A350s, enhancing the long-haul passenger experience when flying through the airline's gateways.

3 QATAR AIRWAYS
Qsuite Next Gen

Qatar Airways plans to elevate its renowned business class by introducing Qsuite Next Gen on its new Boeing 777-9 aircraft. This suite will boast taller privacy dividers, wider double beds and a redesigned Quad suite, catering to up to four passengers for socialising, dining or working. The seat includes wireless charging, mood lighting and touchscreen panels for seat adjustments and entertainment control. The new Companion Suite will allow passengers to face each other by folding away the TV screens, creating a more intimate travel experience.



4 QANTAS
Project Sunrise Business

Qantas will launch Project Sunrise flights for non-stop connections between Australia and New York and London, making them the world's longest flights. Qantas will introduce an all-new business class cabin on its upcoming Airbus A350-1000s to cater to the demands of extensive journeys. The cabin will feature 52 seats arranged in a 1-2-1 layout with sliding doors for complete privacy. Each seat will have two-metre-long flatbeds, ample storage, wireless charging, an 18-inch ultra-high-definition touchscreen TV and large dining table.

5 AMERICAN AIRLINES
Flagship Suite

American Airlines is set to introduce its Flagship Suite, upgrading business class passengers on newly delivered Boeing 787-9s, Airbus A321XLRs and retrofitted Boeing 777-300ERs. The cabin will feature larger seats, sliding wood-effect doors and a modern design. Additionally, the new product will include a Flagship Suite Preferred, located in the front-row bulkhead section of the cabin, offering extra personal space and more storage areas.

IMAGES GETTY IMAGES, BRITISH AIRWAYS, AMER SWEIDAN, AIR NEW ZEALAND, AMERICAN AIRLINES, QANTAS, TURKISH AIRLINES

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When one door closes...

THE MANDARIN ORIENTAL, MIAMI will close its doors for good on 31 May, and is set to be replaced with two towers. One will host a new 121-room Mandarin Oriental hotel with a spa and a handful of fine-dining restaurants. The second will house 228 luxury residences, with interiors by Parisian designer Tristan Auer.

The 326-room hotel first opened in the year 2000 and will celebrate its 25th anniversary with a series of events before closure, including tasting menus of iconic past dishes and a grand gala with live performances.

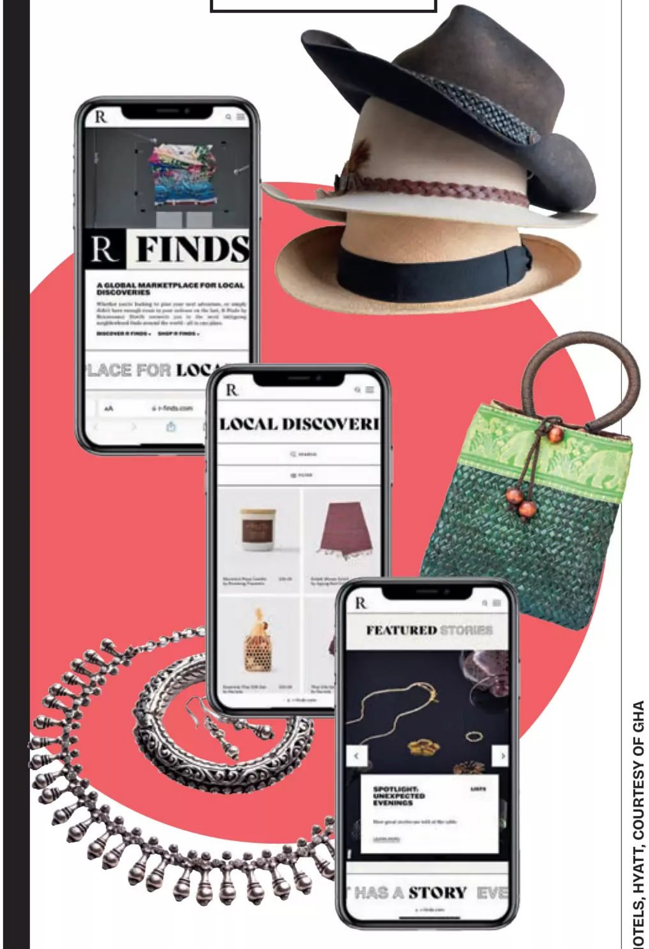
In Europe, meanwhile, the luxury hotel group plans to take over two existing properties from The Set Collection. Hôtel Lutetia, located in Paris' Left Bank, will be renamed Mandarin Oriental Lutetia, Paris, once it has changed hands later this year. The hotel reopened in 2018 after a four-year renovation project, complete with 184 rooms, a brasserie, bar and wellbeing centre.

Conservatorium Hotel, located in Amsterdam's Museum Quarter, will also join the group. The former bank boasts a 19th-century facade with 129 rooms and suites. Expect a refurbishment before a full rebrand in January 2026.

AMSTERDAM The existing hotel will be rebranded in 2026

PARIS Hôtel Lutetia will become a Mandarin Oriental later this year

SHOP LOCAL


R FINDS
A GLOBAL MARKETPLACE FOR LOCAL DISCOVERIES
LACE FOR LOC
LOCAL DISCOVERI
FEATURED STORIES
SPOTLIGHT: UNEXPECTED EVENINGS
HAS A STORY EVE

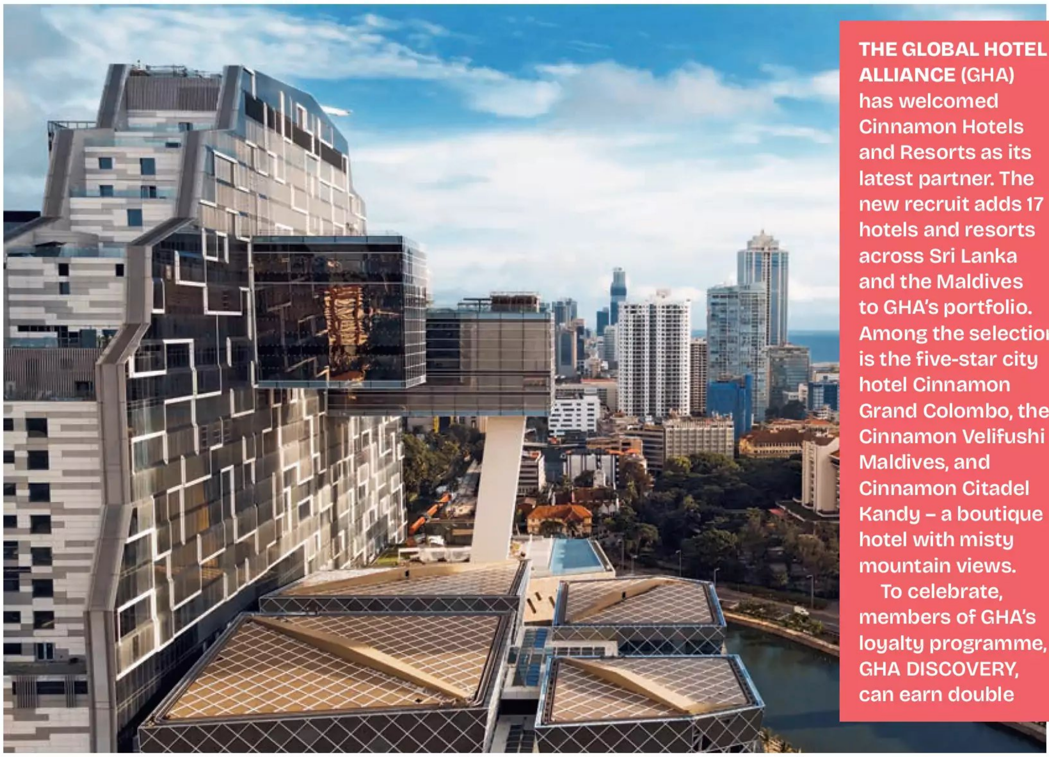
Local finds

Renaissance Hotels has launched an online marketplace under the name R FINDS to connect guests with local communities. The portal aims to support businesses and creators in the destinations that the group operates in. Browse locally produced items and artisan goods such as candles and tea light holders from India, silver pendants made in the Dominican Republic, handbags designed in Thailand, or fedoras crafted by a hatter in New Orleans. The website initially opened with 175 products for sale, one for each of the 175 Renaissance Hotels properties located across the world.

IMAGES AMIT GERON; NATALIE BOARD, COURTESY OF RENAISSANCE HOTELS, HILTON HOTELS, HYATT, COURTESY OF GHA

WORDS
ALICE HENDERSON

GHA gets a spicy new member



THE GLOBAL HOTEL ALLIANCE (GHA) has welcomed Cinnamon Hotels and Resorts as its latest partner. The new recruit adds 17 hotels and resorts across Sri Lanka and the Maldives to GHA's portfolio. Among the selection is the five-star city hotel Cinnamon Grand Colombo, the Cinnamon Velifushi Maldives, and Cinnamon Citadel Kandy – a boutique hotel with misty mountain views.

To celebrate, members of GHA's loyalty programme, GHA DISCOVERY, can earn double DISCOVERY Dollars when booking at one of Cinnamon's properties. Be quick though – bookings need to be made by 6 February, 2025 for stays before 30 September.

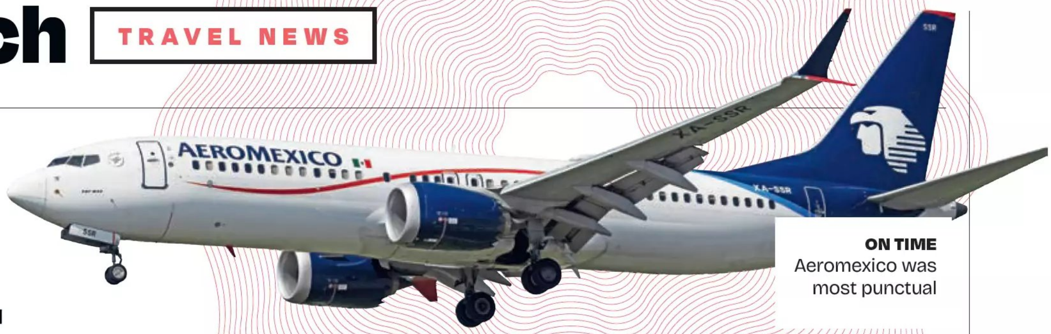
Last year GHA integrated a number of hotel groups including Lore Group (which includes One Hundred Shoreditch and Sea Containers London), serviced apartment operator Cheval Collection, Paramount Hotels in the UAE, Unike Hotels in Norway, Sunway Hotels & Resorts in Malaysia and Andronis in Greece.

The great outdoors

FROM TOP
Stay in an Airstream with the Hilton-AutoCamp partnership; earn Hyatt points from an Under Canvas outdoors adventure

PEOPLE'S YEARNING for the outdoors has grown since the pandemic, with the hospitality industry taking note. Marriott International is the latest to jump on the trend. The group has signed a long-term agreement with outdoor hospitality brand Trailborn, which has boutique properties in extraordinary settings, such as the Rocky Mountain National Park and Grand Canyon. Also joining Marriott's ranks is Postcard Cabins, which has a portfolio of 1,200 lodges across rolling hills, woodland and peaks in America. The group plans to launch its own outdoor-focussed collection in 2025.

Hilton is also stepping out in the wild. Last year, it partnered with AutoCamp for glamping experiences across the US in Airstream travel trailers, tents and cabins. Similarly, Hyatt teamed up with upscale camping provider Under Canvas to offer World of Hyatt members the chance to earn points at its adventurous properties.



ON TIME Aeromexico was most punctual

Most reliable airlines in 2024

Cirium, an aviation analytics company, has released its annual results of airlines with the best on-time performance – and those with the highest cancellations. Airline on-time performance is defined as an aircraft's arrival at the gate, within 15 minutes of the scheduled arrival time.

In 2024, the top airlines were

	GLOBALLY	EUROPE
1	Aeromexico (86.7%)	Iberia Express (84.69%)
2	Saudia (86.35%)	Iberia (81.58%)
3	Delta Air Lines (83.46%)	Scandinavian Airlines (81.40%)
4	LATAM Airlines (82.89%)	Vueling Airlines (81.20%)
5	Qatar Airways (82.83%)	Norwegian (79.23%)
6	Azul Airlines (82.42%)	Air Europa (78.99%)
7	Avianca (81.80%)	Austrian Airlines (78.72%)
8	Iberia (81.58%)	Brussels Airlines (77.77%)
9	Scandinavian Airlines (81.40%)	LOT Polish Airlines (77.72%)
10	United Airlines (80.93%)	Norwegian Air Sweden (76.04%)

European airlines with the most flight cancellations

AIRLINE	FLIGHTS	CANCELLED FLIGHTS
Lufthansa	419,682	12,220
British Airways	310,631	7,117
easyJet	569,574	5,783
KLM	259,837	5,030
Widerøe	118,725	4,438
Air France	280,774	3,802
Turkish Airlines	422, 154	3,726
Ural Airlines	61,021	2,938
Ryanair	1,068,131	2,932
Eurowings	166,769	2,658

TARDY TIMES Lufthansa had the most cancellations

IMAGES ANGEL DI BILIO/ISTOCK EDITORIAL/GETTY IMAGES PLUS, COURTESY OF LUFTHANSA, 123RF IMAGES/DMITRI MARUTA

WORDS
MARK CASWELL
TAMSIN COCKS

WHISKY BAR & GIN PALACE
SHELBY&CO

SHELBY&CO ALL DAY BAR & KITCHEN
SHELBY&CO

By order of the Peaky Blinders

Feel like one of the gang at Birmingham Airport's newest bar and restaurant

BIRMINGHAM AIRPORT has unveiled a new bar and restaurant inspired by the popular *Peaky Blinders* TV series, which was set in the city.

Shelby & Co. Bar and Restaurant has taken over the space that previously housed the Factory Bar and Kitchen in the airport's departure lounge, and has space for 290 diners, with both waiter service and order-at-table technology. Features include a 1920s-inspired decor, and a menu offering dishes and drinks named after characters and locations from the show, including Finn's Fish & Chips, The Tommy Burger, and cocktails including The Garrison and the Birmingham Sour.

It is the first airport location for the franchise, although there is also a Peaky Blinders bar in Manchester.

Commenting on the news, Cathy Granby, business development director for SSP UK and Ireland, said: "Shelby & Co. really does bring this hugely popular show to life. What better way to celebrate all this city has to offer than bringing a flavour of *Peaky Blinders* to Birmingham Airport."

BRITISH PASSPORT
DIEU ET MON DROIT
UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

ETA roll-out continues

THE UK'S ELECTRONIC TRAVEL AUTHORISATION scheme (ETA) will roll out to more than 80 countries in the next few months.

The scheme requires visitors to the UK (who do not need a visa for short stays) to apply for an ETA.

The first phase launched in November 2023 for Qatari citizens, followed by travellers from Jordan and GCC countries. On 8 January, the ETA scheme was extended to 48 countries, including the US, Australia and New Zealand. From 2 April the ETA will be applied to 34 European countries (with applications available from 5 March).

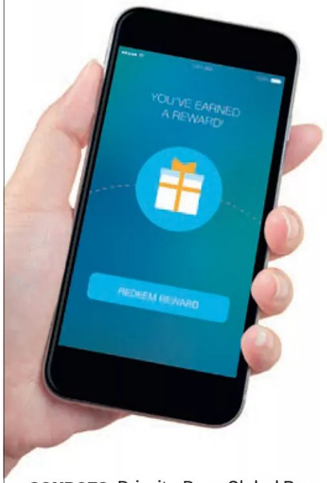
Applications take up to three days to process and cost £10, though the Home Office has proposed increasing this to £16. Once accepted, individuals are covered for two years and multiple journeys (unless your passport expires).

Transit passengers have also been granted a temporary exemption from the ETA scheme following feedback from Heathrow that it had seen 19,000 fewer transit passengers from Qatar in the past four months.

Loyalty rewards

Exploring the connection between travel benefits and customer loyalty

Airport lounge access is a powerful reward



80%

would consider changing credit card if airport lounge access was removed

SOURCES: Priority Pass Global Brand Research 2024; The Value of Travel Benefits on Cardholder Behaviour 2024

CUSTOMERS ARE INCREASINGLY swayed by travel reward benefits. According to research by Priority Pass, 84% of consumers rate travel perks as, or more, important than the bank or card issuer's reputation when it comes to choosing a credit card.

Airport lounge access is consistently voted as the second most important reward (after cashback opportunities), with 80% of global customers saying they would consider changing card if airport lounge access was removed.

There are some differences between global markets. The persuasive power of lounge access holds strongest in the Asia-Pacific region, where 94% of consumers would be willing to switch cards if lounge access was removed, while in the more mature EMEA market, lounge access is often expected as a standard benefit. In the US meanwhile, airport lounge access is such a valuable reward that 78% of customers are willing to pay for a new credit card that offers this benefit.

As the loyalty landscape matures, lounge access will likely also start to come with additional perks – with the option to bring a guest and guaranteed access starting to emerge as benefit expectations. In the US, 69% would already be willing to pay extra for pre-booking lounge access.

Other travel benefits rated in the top ten include travel insurance, airport transfers, express airport security lanes, plus shopping and dining discounts. Discounted airport parking and car hire were also seen as important benefits.

"Our research shows the continued importance of travel rewards to keep customers engaged, spending, and loyal to their payment card provider. To remain competitive and build loyalty, we partner with our clients to evolve these benefits to meet the changing needs of customers. We do this through a combination of investments, collaboration, and innovation," said Chris Ross, President Loyalty and Chief Brand Officer – Priority Pass.

Give the people what they want

Chris Ross, President Loyalty and Chief Brand Officer – Priority Pass, discusses customer loyalty behaviours

HOW HAS THE LOYALTY LANDSCAPE EVOLVED?
Loyalty is becoming more automated and personalised. Loyalty programmes are also more interconnected, with loyalty currencies becoming tradeable.

HOW IMPORTANT ARE TRAVEL BENEFITS?
Travel benefits (anything that makes travel smoother, more comfortable, or more special) are one of the most aspirational rewards. Analysis of payment card data shows that the more people use travel benefits on their payment card, the more they use their card. The popularity of airport lounge programme Priority Pass as a key travel benefit for credit card propositions underlines this.

WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST TURN-OFFS FOR CUSTOMERS WHEN IT COMES TO LOYALTY PROGRAMMES AND REWARDS?
As with all relationships: unfulfilled promises and breaches of trust (especially around data use and protection). Devaluing loyalty rewards is seen as a failure to uphold a contract with members and represents a key frustration. The barriers to disengagement are lower than ever, while expectations are constantly rising and competition is fierce. Members will no longer tolerate programmes that fail to remember their previous interactions or anticipate individual needs. This makes every member interaction both a valuable opportunity and a threat.

WHAT IS "REWARD FATIGUE"?
Reward fatigue denotes decreasing engagement from members. It mainly points to a reduction in the value of rewards, making it more difficult for members to reach a material rewards level. Developing strong partnerships allows loyalty programmes to broaden reward relevance and keep the proposition fresh.

ARE WE SEEING GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES?
Surprisingly, there is little attitudinal difference in customers' expectation from loyalty. But there is a difference in tolerance level: Gen Z (and beyond) are far quicker to defect from a brand than Boomers, and have higher demands on the customer experience and (digital) interface quality. Conversely, Gen Z are more likely to join a new programme, therefore the cost to acquire Gen Z as members is lower – but their tenure as a member is likely to be shorter.

IMAGES ERNEST YANG, GETTY; STATIONIDEA; IZUSEK

What are the pet peeves for customers?

Customers are no longer putting up with poor return on their loyal custom

25%
have noticed rewards value being diluted over time

20%
are frustrated by a lack of redemption options

15%
resent a lack of personalisation which means they receive irrelevant and poorly targeted offers

33%
are happy and content with their loyalty programme

6%
of customers belong to more than six schemes. Those belonging to multiple schemes are more likely to have concerns

The top 3
changes consumers would make is to increase reward value, have more experiential and partner benefit options, and have more 'surprise and delight' perks

SOURCE:
Figures come from Collinson's UK Loyalty Landscape research

Did you know?

Loyalty programmes are valuable assets in themselves. In the travel sector, airlines have used the valuation of their loyalty programmes as loan collateral – a trend that accelerated during Covid when fare income dried up.

Top tips to maximise your travel perks

1 **HAVE THE RIGHT SET OF CREDIT CARDS** in your wallet to maximise the rewards you seek based on your travel and expenditure patterns. But beware of over coverage – don't split your loyalty currency earning across too many cards or you will dilute the benefits you receive.

2 **FOCUS ON TRAVEL BRANDS** with a rich earning and redemption partner network.

3 **CONSIDER PAID-FOR ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMMES** from airports, airlines and hotel groups – often the 'break-even' point for such programmes is quite low, as they intend to generate loyalty and additional spend.

Tokyo-asis

Find tranquillity away from the city's neon lights at this new luxury hotel

BACK TO NATURE Lush foliage, neutral tones and stunning views abound at 1 Hotel Tokyo

THE ECO-FRIENDLY 1 Hotels brand is set to debut a new 211-room biophilic paradise in Tokyo this year, located in the city's upscale Akasaka district. Developed in partnership with Japanese property firm Mori Trust, the hotel will be part of the Tokyo World Gate Akasaka complex. While an opening date has not yet been confirmed, visuals reveal local design details inspired by the Japanese concept of wabi-sabi – the appreciation of beauty in imperfection. Expect soothing stone water features, a ceiling modelled on the raked sand of a Zen garden, plus Oya stone, which was used by architect Frank Lloyd Wright for some of his Japanese buildings. Rooms and suites will feature moss walls and wood-beamed ceilings, plus clever accents such as TV consoles with integrated planters. As with the brand's sister hotels (see our London and Toronto reviews at businesstraveller.com/tried-and-tested), public spaces will be replete with organic furnishings, plant-lined walls, reclaimed and recycled materials, plus plenty of behind-the-scenes work to reduce energy and water consumption. Scintillating views of the Imperial Palace and the city's skyline await from the 38th floor lobby.

DID YOU KNOW?

1 Hotel Tokyo has achieved the Rank S certification from CASBEE (Comprehensive Assessment System for Built Environment Efficiency) – the highest level of environment performance.

IMAGES GETTY IMAGES; 1 HOTELS; COURTESY OF STANSTED AIRPORT

WORDS
HANNAH BRANDLER

Sustainable sanction

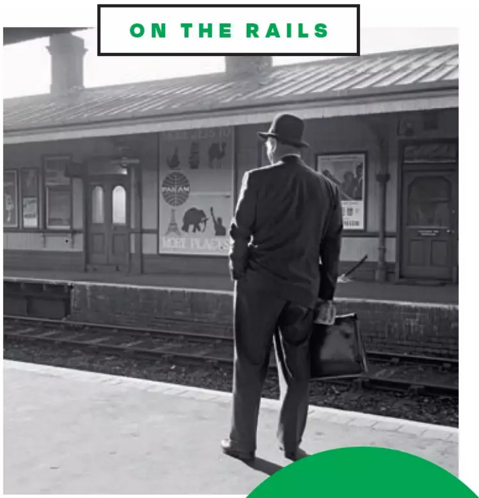
THE UK government's Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) mandate has come into force, an encouraging move in the long journey to decarbonise air travel. To begin with, SAF must make up 2% of all jet fuel in flights departing from the UK, growing year-on-year to 10% by 2030 and 22% in 2040, remaining at this level thereafter "until there is greater certainty regarding SAF supply". The government says that this mandate could deliver up to 6.3 megatonnes of carbon savings per year by 2040.

Stansted goes solar

LONDON STANSTED Airport has appointed EDF Renewables UK to construct and operate its new 14.3MW solar farm – the first of its kind at a London airport. Located on Stansted-owned land to the east of the airport, the development will meet both the airport's existing and increasing electricity demands, including the growing use of electric vehicles, and support the airport's aim to reach net zero carbon operations by 2038. The development will also enhance the biodiversity onsite, with the planting of over 50 new willow and field maple trees, 750 metres of new hedgerows and a 19-hectare wildflower meadow.

DID YOU KNOW?
At its peak, the farm output will provide the equivalent energy consumed by approximately 6,000 homes.

ON THE RAILS



63% of UK business travellers choose the train for domestic work trips

45% of UK companies incentivise sustainable travel choices

93% of domestic work trips within the UK were made by train in 2024

30% agreed that train travel improves work productivity due to extended time in one place

95% of London-Paris journeys booked with TravelPerk were for trains in 2024, versus 5% by air

BUT 55% cite poor wifi as their biggest complaint of train travel, followed by excessive noise (46%), lack of privacy (41%) and lack of seats (38%)

Source: TravelPerk's booking data plus a survey of 1,000 UK business travellers conducted in partnership with OnePoll in September 2024.

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EXTRA DAY

Antwerp

Belgium's stylish second city is a haven for fashion, food and art

WORDS **CLODAGH KINSELLA**

The world's diamond capital, and the richest city in Europe during its 16th-century Golden Age, Antwerp's charm offensive begins on arrival at the cathedral-like Central Station, with its dizzying array of architectural styles. Head south to the historic centre for cobbled streets lined with appealing watering holes like Café De Kat, an old-school 'brown cafe'. Antwerp's main square, the Grote Markt, glitters with superb guild houses, while The Cathedral of Our Lady – the largest Gothic church in the Low Countries – houses masterpieces by former Antwerp resident Rubens, including his triptych

IMAGES JONNE MÄKIKYRÖ/UNSPLASH

The Descent from the Cross. There's more pomp on display at Baroque church Saint Charles Borromeo, and for snackable souvenirs, try 'Antwerp Hands' (nodding to the legend of the city's birth) from Philip's Biscuits.

TAKE SANCTUARY
Antwerp's first five-star hotel, the Botanic Sanctuary, transformed the local hospitality scene when it opened in 2022. For one thing, the former 13th-century monastery has an embarrassment of Michelin stars, split between two-star legend Hertog Jan's three-hour Omakase experiences, and one-star restaurants Fine Fleur (laidback fine dining) and Het Gebaar (afternoon teas from a much-garlanded pastry chef). Besides the Zen rooms and suites, there's a spa with a greenhouse-style pool, and The Unprecedented – a whisky investment club hosting ultra-rare single malts. The Theaterbuurt's high-end shops and galleries and the city's tranquil Botanical Garden are right on the doorstep.

SHOP IN SINT-ANDRIES
Ever since edgy designers the Antwerp Six emerged in the 1980s, Belgium's second city has ruled in the style stakes. The compact Sint-Andries district has the highest concentration of riches, starting with Dries Van Noten's stately flagship, Het Modepaleis. Just down Nationalestraat, fashion museum MoMu – which shares digs with the city's fashion school – offers winning temporary shows. For handmade leather gloves, dip into the old-school Ganterie Boon, or bag discounted Belgian designer garb at Labels Inc. And antiques strip Kloosterstraat, which runs parallel to the Scheldt river, abounds in vintage curios and mid-century furniture. Don't miss the Plantin-Moretus Museum (the world's only UNESCO-listed museum), which has the first ever printing presses.

CULTURAL HIGHLIGHTS
From top: The Zaha Hadid-designed Port House; the MAS museum along the river Scheldt; Ganterie Boon

> "The roof terrace of the MAS museum offers the city's finest panorama"

SCOPE THE VIEWS
The motor behind the gentrification of the once gritty Het Eilandje neighbourhood, north of the city centre, is the MAS museum – a sandstone construction reminiscent of supersized Lego. While the maritime-themed collections are skippable, the roof terrace offers the city's finest panorama – spanning the Scheldt, the yacht-lined docks below, and The Cathedral of Our Lady; the ninth floor restaurant Zilte adds three-star, seafood cuisine to the mix. The MAS isn't the district's only architectural icon, with late starchitect Zaha Hadid signing off on the Port House Authority building, whose diamond-shaped extension projects over the port's northern limits. It's a short walk from the Red Star Line Museum, which honours the transatlantic shipping company that ferried some two million passengers (Jewish refugees like Einstein amongst them) to the US and Canada until the 1930s.

ART THERAPY
All regal squares and stately boulevards, there's a distinctly Parisian air to the south-lying Het Zuid quarter (locals sometimes call it 'Le Petit Paris'). Its focal point, the neo-classical KMSKA or Royal Museum of Fine Arts Antwerp, reopened in 2022 after an 11-year restoration. Now two museums in one, it houses more treasures by Rubens, searing Flemish Primitivist Van Eyck and a horde of works by macabre Belgian painter James Ensor. Het Zuid itself offers endless café terraces for devouring Belgian classics, such as *stoofvlees* (Flemish beef stew). **BT**

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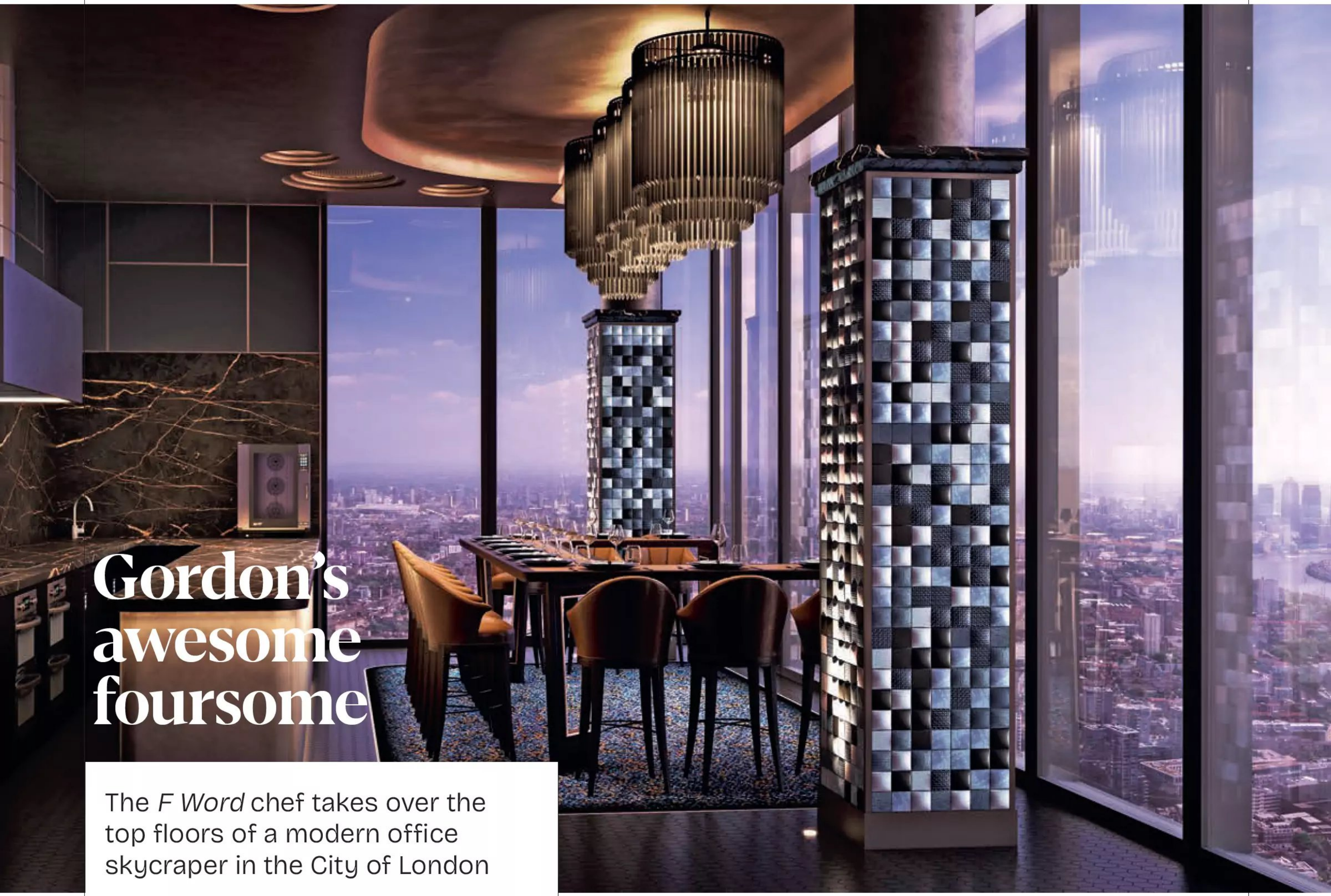


Gordon's awesome foursome

The *F Word* chef takes over the top floors of a modern office skycraper in the City of London

NOT EXACTLY SOMEONE to do things by halves, Gordon Ramsay is launching not one but four new spaces atop London's soaring office building 22 Bishopsgate. Knockout London views come as standard thanks to the enviable high-rise location in the heart of the city, while the famously fiery chef, who puts the F in food more than most, has worked with long-time partners Russell Sage Studio to craft the luxurious interiors.

Serving an "Asian-inspired menu", Lucky Cat by Gordon Ramsay will officially become London's highest restaurant with Europe's highest rooftop bar to boot. Level 60 will also feature a 14-seat chef's table from Chelsea's Restaurant Gordon Ramsay, which has held three Michelin stars for 22 years, since it opened 25 years ago.

One floor down, Bread Street Kitchen & Bar by Gordon Ramsay will be home to relaxed dining, cocktails and afternoon tea with more of those hypnotic views. Finally, the Gordon Ramsay Academy will let amateur cooks hone their techniques in everything from pasta to Beef Wellington and cocktails. Whether Ramsay will judge them in his typically forthright style remains to be seen.

Fine dining on the move

SIMON ROGAN is officially the British chef garlanded with the most Michelin stars – sorry, Gordon – and exquisite dishes grace his restaurants from Cumbria to Hong Kong. A true farm-to-fork pioneer, he and his team will soon be cooking up a storm on board the first luxury sleeper train in England and Wales: The Britannic Explorer, A Belmond Train. The fusion of his contemporary British gastronomy with the spectacular natural landscapes of Cornwall, the Lake District and Wales certainly has us enthused, while there will even be a wellness suite for post-lunch massages. The only challenge? Having to get off.

WORDS
CHRIS DWYER

TREND

Tea cocktails

BRITS ARE WELL KNOWN for their love of a cuppa, so it's not surprising that tea-infused tipples have continued to brew in popularity across some of the country's hottest bars and restaurants. Although PG Tips may not get much of a look-in, floral flavours from chamomile to Assam and green tea all appear on menus in creative libations. Here are four spots stirring them up.

PE-TI-T PUNCH

Bar Antoine at Pavyllon at Four Seasons London Park Lane crafts this seriously vibrant number, which combines Santa Teresa 1796 rum, Vermouth, pandan, Daiginjo Genshu sake and sparkling tea to sublime effect. Don't miss stellar bar snacks that accompany them, such as a truffle croque monsieur.

SHOCKING PINK

This signature cocktail is served at Elsa's in The Fife Arms, a beautiful highland retreat not far from Balmoral Castle. The gorgeous and historic bar is intoxicating in itself, but the combination of hibiscus, cherry, sage, seedlip and a topping of sparkling rosé completes the bubbly experience.

ASSAM MANHATTAN

The classic Manhattan is twisted with south Asian aromatics at Cinnamon Kitchen City near London's Liverpool Street station. Assam Black tea is infused with Buffalo Trace bourbon, Vermouth, maraschino and black cardamom, promising a dangerously delicious result.

EARL GREY SOUR

The aptly named Botanic Tearoom at Liverpool's Municipal Hotel serves up a sour featuring Earl Grey syrup, Tanqueray, grapefruit juice and egg white. Once shaken, a foam carries tea notes while the grapefruit cuts through perfectly.

Love is in the air

Looking to make a reservation for 14 February? The cuisine at this impressive culinary quartet more than matches the dizzying vistas

Kioku by Endo, London

Kioku at Raffles London at The OWO boasts spectacular views, especially from the remarkable private dining space in a turret overlooking Whitehall and up to Westminster. Helmed by acclaimed Japanese chef Endo Kazutoshi, the menu combines Japanese heritage with Mediterranean technique. The white crab with tagliolini, brown crab miso and shiso butter is ethereal.

La Pergola, Rome

Few views get the heart racing as much as the Eternal City, and nowhere can hold a Valentine's candle to the magnificent hilltop outlook of Rome Cavalieri, a Waldorf Astoria hotel. Chef Heinz Beck is the maestro at three Michelin-starred La Pergola, where brilliant, innovative cuisine is firmly grounded in sustainability, while the Vatican, Colosseum and the city's famed hills are all laid out beneath you.

Le Jules Verne, Paris

This Parisian legend, perched 125 metres high, offers staggering views over all of Paris. Located on the Eiffel Tower's second floor, it's where chef Frédéric Anton oversees pricey but seriously accomplished tasting menus acclaimed with two Michelin stars. A seven-course dinner menu at €320 includes lobster with vanilla and Granny Smith apple, plus turbot with beurre blanc, yuzu and Oscietra caviar.

El Jardín del Ritz, Madrid

Given the Spanish capital's visitor-friendly climate, the elegant Ritz Garden terrace at Mandarin Oriental Ritz, Madrid, is open year-round. The uber-stylish al fresco spot is the perfect setting for cuisine by Michelin-starred maestro Quique Dacosta. As a Valencia native, there's simply no better to craft genuine paellas for the ultimate Spanish culinary immersion.

IMAGES **COURTESY OF GORDON RAMSAY, BELMOND, FOUR SEASONS; ANTONIO SABA; STEPHAN JULLIARD; MANOLO YLLERA**

WORDS
LAUREL IVES

Brain boost at King's Cross

The 'Mind Your Brain' festival returns for an extended period, featuring the Slomo Sauna by DJ Rob da Bank

RADIO 1 DJ AND FOUNDER of Bestival, Rob da Bank is a passionate advocate for the health benefits of hot and cold therapy. His Finnish-crafted Slomo Sauna, usually located on the Isle of Wight, has made its way to London's King's Cross as part of the 'Mind Your Brain' festival, running until March. Located in the centre of the upscale shopping hotspot, the Slomo Sauna will offer shoppers an affordable way to de-stress with two wood-fired saunas, three cold plunge pools and an ice tank seating six people, all centred around a fire. There's also hot yoga, silent sauna sessions, leaf whisking, body scrubs and the Aufguss sauna ritual. Every week will close with a "Sunday Best" sauna session – named after the club and record label run by Rob and his wife Josie. These sessions will feature extras such as gong baths, chill-out playlists, comedy and chanting around the fire. "There is no better and healthier way to kick off the year than with a sauna and cold plunge – so support your health with an hour of 'me' time," says Rob da Bank. We couldn't agree more.

POP-UP WELLNESS Feel revived in the Slomo Sauna and cold plunge pools

STATS BAR

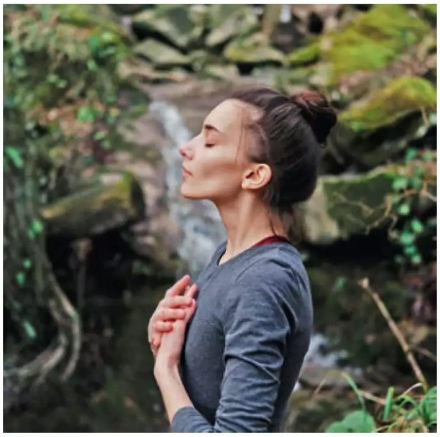
Plant power

Accor – the largest hospitality company in Europe, operating more than 40 brands worldwide – has pledged to make

50%

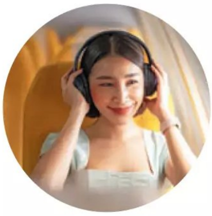
of its menu offerings plant-based by 2030

IMAGES **JOHN STURROCK; COURTESY OF SLOMO SAUNA; 123R**



Key wellness trends in 2025

Wellness tourism is growing fast and forecast to reach US$1.4 trillion by 2027. A new report, *The Future of Wellness Tourism 2025,* from FINN Partners' global travel practice, highlights a number of intriguing trends



Flying is often the most stressful part of a journey, with airlines and airports investing in cutting-edge technology to transform passenger experiences – such as an oxygen lounge in Tokyo Narita.

◆

Women's health is a key focus, with travel providers offering new programmes to address everything from sexual wellbeing to fertility and menopause.

Thermal springs are drawing plenty of investment to cater to travellers' desires for less-visited, nature-focused destinations.

◆

'Nomadism' is having a surge in adoption by middle and older age wellness seekers, who might choose to stay longer at a wellness resort or invest in a residential offering.

Japan, South Korea and Saudi Arabia were all flagged as emerging wellness destinations.

Healthspan over lifespan

New tech and wellbeing initiatives aim to not only help us live longer, but also thrive in those later years

WE MAY BE LIVING LONGER, but many of those extra years are spent in poor health. It's no surprise then that enhancing "healthspan" has emerged as the leading wellness trend in Euromonitor's 2025 Consumer Trends Report.

"A new view of ageing is on the rise. People don't just want to live longer (lifespan); they want to feel better for longer (healthspan). They want to feel good – physically, mentally, emotionally – at every stage of life," write the authors.

In December 2024, the JAMA Medical Journal examined the healthspan-lifespan gap – the number of years a person lives with a disease or disability – and found it widening. The largest gap, at 12.4 years, was reported in the US, with the UK, Australia, and New Zealand close behind.

So how are people prioritising healthspan? Prevention is key, with a boom in high-tech wearables allowing individuals to monitor their health and fitness. "Personalised supplements, fitness regimens and biohacking techniques are becoming a common part of daily routines," added the report's authors.

FIT FOR LIFE A major wellness trend is prioritising healthy ageing

LN-OFS
AIRBUS
Reykjavik Helicopters
www.rh.is
ELEVEN
DANGER

Ski to sea

Get your adrenaline pumping in Iceland's adventurous terrains this winter

ICELAND'S OFF-GRID adventure-packed lodge Eleven Deplar Farm has launched a new (heli-)Ski to Sea package, promising the best that the remote Fljót Valley on the mountainous Troll Peninsula has to offer. Expect 3,000-foot vertical runs all the way to the ocean, fishing for sea brown trout in the Huséyjarkvisl river, plus well-deserved wellness at the 13-room lodge – complete with a geothermal-heated outdoor pool, sauna and steam room. The package is available on various dates between April and May, starting from £2,694 per night (based on double occupancy).

THE EXPERIENCE

SASSICAIA
BOLGHERI
2020

A taste of Tuscany

Luxury hotel The Lanesborough London kicks off the month with a series of immersive wine evenings, set within the original wine cellar of Lanesborough House and the adjoining Westminster Room. The inaugural dinner, priced at £420, transports guests overseas to Tuscany with a four-course seasonal British menu accompanied by five Tenuta San Guido vintages.

WORDS
HANNAH BRANDLER

THE BAG

Art of travel

RIMOWA adds an abstract look to its high-end cabin cases

HIGH-END luggage brand RIMOWA has partnered with British artist Ptolemy Mann for a limited-edition series of cases, including this Essential Cabin Nautical, whose polycarbonate shell features an iteration of Mann's 'Threshold' artwork. Inside, you'll find further hints of abstract expressionism. Available at stores worldwide and online for £1,090.

LUGGAGE PICK

THE WATCH

Dial into this new style

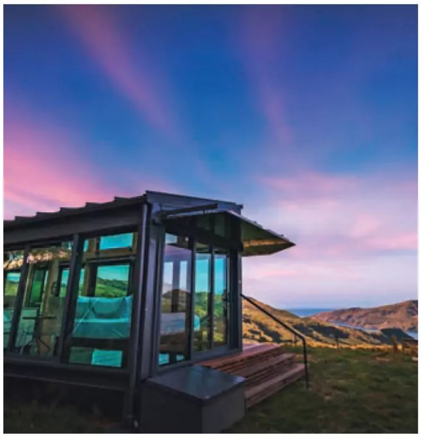
Swiss watch company IWC Schaffhausen has unveiled its latest stylish timepiece. The Ingenieur Automatic 40, complete with a bold blue dial, draws inspiration from Gérald Genta's Ingenieur SL from the 1970s.

Priced at £10,100 and available at watches-of-switzerland.co.uk

IWC
SCHAFFHAUSEN
25
INGENIEUR

THE EXPERIENCE

Panoramic picture



TRAVEL SPECIALISTS, New Zealand In Depth, have unveiled a new glass-walled pod on the country's North Island, marrying minimalist luxury with eco design. Stays at the secluded solar-powered Matū PurePod promise uninterrupted views of the Waitomo wilderness – from sunrise vistas to magical Milky Way nights – while the lack of wifi encourages guests to connect with nature rather than emails. Fret not, the cabins are still replete with luxury linen and a powerful hot shower. A one-night stay starts from £225 per person per night, including dinner and a breakfast hamper (based on two people sharing). An additional 15 PurePods are dotted across the North and South islands – from Waipara Valley to the Rakiura Stewart Island conservation reserve.

IMAGE **PAUL WILSON IMAGES; ELEVEN/ROBERT SIM; DAVID COTSWORTH; COURTESY OF RIMOWA**

WORDS
HANNAH BRANDLER
ALICE HENDERSON

WATCH

Zero Day

Robert De Niro is taking on the world of TV production – starring in and executive producing this Netflix series, streaming from 20 February. The thriller follows former president George Mullen who investigates a cyberattack. At a time of widespread disinformation, the show asks the topical question: "How do we find truth in a world in crisis?"

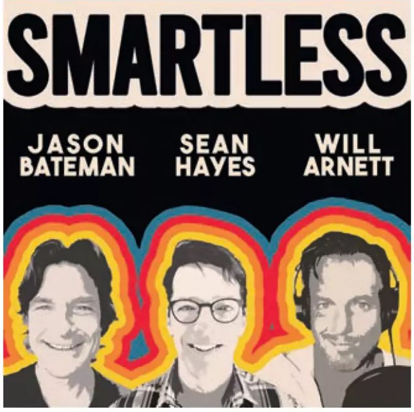
READ

Life in the Pitlane: My Journey to the Heart of F1 by Calum Nicholas

CALUM NICHOLAS
LIFE IN THE PITLANE
MY JOURNEY TO THE HEART OF F1

DELVE INTO THE WORLD OF FORMULA 1 with this memoir from Red Bull's senior engineer, and frequent traveller, Calum Nicholas. He shares his experience of (literally) living life on the road and the lessons he's learned along the way. Expect fast-paced, thrilling tales of his time working in the pit lane, as well as a look at the motorsport industry – how it's changed over the past 15 years and what lies ahead. Published on 27 February. £25; Piatkus

LISTEN



Smartless

FILM FANS WILL ENJOY this weekly podcast hosted by actors Jason Bateman, Sean Hayes and Will Arnett. The trio started the podcast during the pandemic and now boast over 200 episodes, interviewing big names every week. Recent guests including actors Hugh Grant, Daniel Craig and Gillian Anderson, as well as director Denis Villeneuve.

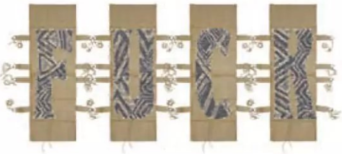
CULTURAL CALENDAR

OUR PICK OF EVENTS TAKING PLACE AROUND THE WORLD

DOMESTIC

Ai Weiwei: A New Chatpter, London
7 February – 15 March

Lisson Gallery's exhibition by artist Ai Weiwei brings together a selection of his newest work. All the way down to its playful title (the typo is intentional), the works investigate the world we live in. At its centre is the audaciously named installation, F.U.C.K, which combines more than 9,000 buttons and Second World War stretchers.



SHORT-HAUL

The Mucha Museum, Prague

Previously located on Pánská Street, The Mucha Foundation has relocated to an exhibition space designed by architect Eva Jiricna in the Savarin Palace. The institution is dedicated entirely to the work of Czech artist Alphonse Mucha, a figure of the Art Nouveau era. Expect theatrical posters characterised by swirling lines, natural motifs and depictions of elegant women.

LONG-HAUL

Winterlude, Ottawa
until 17 February

Since 1979, people have visited Canada's capital in February to enjoy the northern climate. It's expanded to three weekends of celebrations with activities such as ice sculpting, skating on the five-mile-long Rideau Canal Skateway and dancing the night away at Igloofest music festival.

IMAGES COURTESY OF NETFLIX 2024; AI WEIWEI STUDIO, COURTESY OF LISSON GALLERY; CRESTYL; OTTAWA TOURISM; COURTESY OF SMARTLESS MEDIA

SPONSORED CONTENT

Travel forecast 2025

Marriott Bonvoy's 'Ticket to Travel' research reveals savvy spending, 'brave-cations' and heritage-focused trips will be key themes for leisure travel this year.

BUSINESS TRAVEL TRENDS tend to focus on speed, efficiency and comfort. But what about when we put our holiday hats on?

After conducting a survey with 21,374 people across Europe, the Middle East and Africa, Marriott Bonvoy has gained valuable insight into customer travel intentions for the forthcoming year.

Around 40% of respondents are planning to take more holidays than ever before – but what will these trips look like?

Artificial intelligence

Whether you like it or not, AI is here to stay. The futuristic technology is set to pick up speed in 2025, with more travellers using AI to plan their trips. Of those surveyed, 41% said they used AI tools such as chatbots to help plan or book a holiday in 2024, a drastic rise from 26% the year before. Unsurprisingly, it's the youngsters leading the way; AI tools are most popular among those aged 18 to 24.

Sustainability

Travellers' concern for the environment is another enduring force. While cleanliness (95%), price (92%) and location (91%) are still the most important factors across all markets, sustainability is also now a key consideration for 65% of holidaymakers.

More than half of people said that they've looked up how environmentally friendly their accommodation was after their holiday, while 43% of UK travellers opt for eco-friendly travel alternatives, such as trains or other forms of public transport, over flights.

Tracing your roots

'Heritage holidays' are set to be the new big thing in 2025. Particularly popular among younger generations, these are holidays for people wanting to explore their family history or learn about their heritage first hand. For these travellers, Marriott Bonvoy found the driving factor is believing "it's important to know where your family come from and understand what their life was like". Others are keen to visit ancestral homes (45%) and reconnect with long-lost relatives (29%). This trend highlights a growing demand for culturally rich, meaningful travel experiences that connect individuals with their roots.

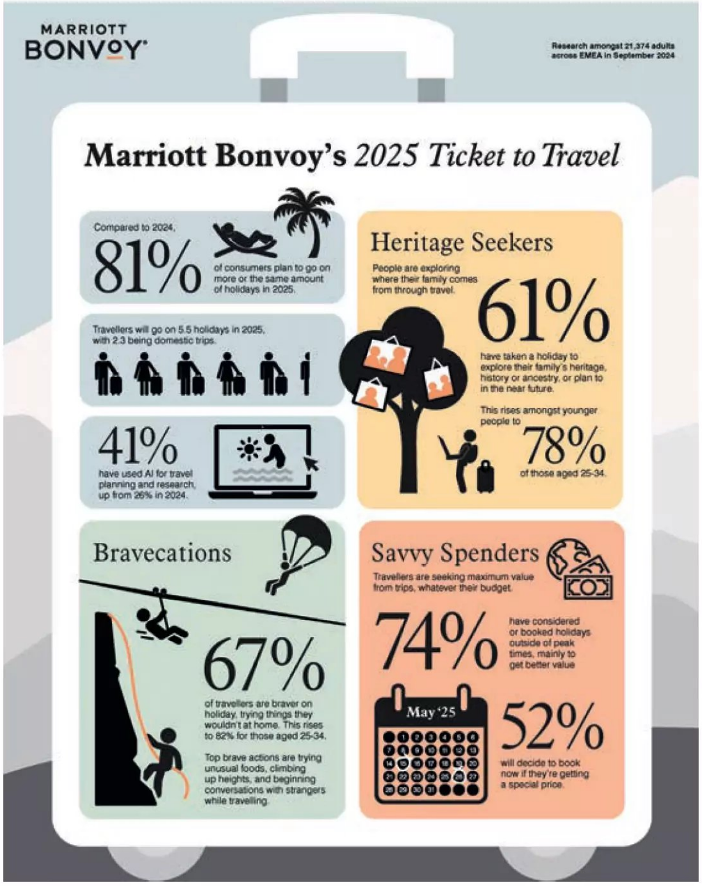
> "One increasingly popular money-saving method is to book trips during the shoulder season"

Bravecations

It turns out that being in holiday mode helps us pluck up the courage to try something new. From tasting exotic foods to engaging in adrenaline filled activities and even striking up a conversation with a complete stranger – visiting foreign shores turns us into bigger daredevils. Age plays a role here, with 82% of 25–34-year-olds reporting feeling braver on holiday, versus just 39% of travellers aged over 65.

Savvy spending

Everyone loves a deal, no matter their budget, and bargain hunters have some new tactics up their sleeve. One increasingly popular money-saving method is to book trips during the shoulder season, when prices are lower. Almost 75% of people said they have considered travelling during off-season to get better value. For other money-minded travellers, analysing exchange rates will be taken into consideration when choosing their next holiday destination.


MARRIOTT BONVOY

Research amongst 21,374 adults across EMEA in September 2024

Marriott Bonvoy's *2025 Ticket to Travel*

Compared to 2024, 81% of consumers plan to go on more or the same amount of holidays in 2025.

Travellers will go on 5.5 holidays in 2025, with 2.3 being domestic trips.

41% have used AI for travel planning and research, up from 26% in 2024.

Heritage Seekers

People are exploring where their family comes from through travel.

61% have taken a holiday to explore their family's heritage, history or ancestry, or plan to in the near future.

This rises amongst younger people to 78% of those aged 25-34.

Bravecations

67% of travellers are braver on holiday, trying things they wouldn't at home. This rises to 82% for those aged 25-34.

Top brave actions are trying unusual foods, climbing up heights, and beginning conversations with strangers while travelling.

Savvy Spenders

Travellers are seeking maximum value from trips, whatever their budget.

74% have considered or booked holidays outside of peak times, mainly to get better value

52% will decide to book now if they're getting a special price.

MARRIOTT BONVOY

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THE BIG INTERVIEW

WITH PAUL GRIFFITHS

CEO OF DUBAI AIRPORTS

Emirates
virgin atlantic
Virgin

> ‘The less time we detain our customers, the happier they are. Standing in line at airports should not exist’

Dan Ross chats to the CEO of Dubai Airports about the Emirate’s growth ambitions, customer experience and the challenge of sustainability

BIOGRAPHY

Paul Griffiths has been the CEO of Dubai Airports since 2007, overseeing the operation and development of DXB – the world’s busiest airport for international passengers – as well as Dubai World Central – Al Maktoum International (DWC). Before moving to Dubai, Paul was managing director of London’s Gatwick Airport and was also board director of the Virgin Travel Group.

ILLUSTRATIONS PAUL RYDING

Q&A

Tell us about your journey to become the CEO of one of the world’s best-connected airports?
I started in the airport business in 2003, working closely with Richard Branson in the Virgin Group for 14 years – first at Virgin Atlantic Airways and then Virgin Trains.

Branson’s ethos has always been to put the fun and romance back into travel in whatever mode that might be. I knew about pleasing customers and how to make that commercially successful.

At the time, Gatwick Airport was very conscious that it didn’t have a great reputation in the eyes of its customers – the airlines. We underwent a cultural transformation and facilitated the growth of airlines at Gatwick. As a result, I got noticed in Dubai.

In the year 2000, Emirates put in a very large order of the A380. The late, great Maurice Flanagan, who started Emirates back in the 80s, said to my boss, Sheikh Ahmed: “Unless you sort the airport out, these planes will arrive and we’ll have gridlock and chaos. We’ve got to get someone to sort this out for us.” The head-hunter called me and it sounded like a great opportunity.

We became one of the top airports for international travel ten years ago and we’re determined to keep that crown. Pre-pandemic, we were under 90 million passengers, and in 2024, we were projected to reach at least 93 million. Every time we revise our projections, it’s always in the upward direction.

What strategies have enabled Dubai’s leap to become the second busiest airport in the world in 2024? And how do you plan to maintain this?
Sheikh Ahmed told me the only KPI is to never constrain the growth of aviation. It’s so important to the city. We’re a key part of the strategic supply chain for our 90 airline customers, with the predominant two being Emirates and flydubai. We have to support their growth ambitions. So, there’s always slots available and terminal capacity. The quality of the infrastructure is equally important, so we’ve invested heavily over the past 15 years to support

Continued from overleaf

that. The big game-changer has been the way we've applied process and technology. We recognise that the airport breaks into two basic functions: the flow and the dwell parts.

Can you tell us more about the flow and dwell? Like the prison service, the less time we detain our customers, the happier they are! Standing in line in airports should not exist. We should stop building large capacity terminal buildings just to allow people to queue up. The technology exists now to eliminate this. We need to be like a modern metro when it comes to check-in. We're working on trialling facial recognition when you walk into the airport that's married up with your booking and sent to immigration so you're immediately cleared to leave the country. Then the only thing we need is a thorough but brief and non-intrusive security process. Within about three steps, all the formalities are done. That's the vision. We're getting close to that now.

This also creates more time and opportunities for people to enjoy the dwell spaces, which need to be incredibly comfortable with places to sit, have innovative products to inspire people and great bars and restaurants. They've also got to be close to the aeroplanes, so there's no anxiety involved in getting to the gate.

Many people hate the airport experience. How can you revolutionise this? We want to make travel more personal. We want to take all the stress out and bring the emotion and romance back. We want to make it feel like it's for

Departures
Flight
Destination
LB 7935
JK 8257
KC 9538
SA 6482
LONDON
ROME
NEW
PAR
DUB
AI

‘We want to make travel more personal. We want to take all the stress out and bring the emotion and romance back’ the select few, like how it was in the 50s, but actually make it for the very many.

Have you taken inspiration from other global airports?
I'm quite forensic when I travel. I wouldn't say there's a single airport that's got everything right, but I've looked at best practice. Changi's good. I always remember the positive attitude of its immigration staff who say "Welcome to Singapore" and sound really genuine and pleased that you've come to their city.

We embarked on a massive cultural change programme. We've put a lot of training and development into the people we've recruited over the last ten years and our stakeholders. Now there's a very unified approach to customer service and we've seen the scores improve dramatically.

How have recent issues in the region affected peoples' desire to connect through the UAE?
I've had a lot of people comment on that, but it's not borne out in the numbers. I think people's perception of geography is very different from the reality. We are not in any immediate situation where we have any cause for concern. In fact, we've seen an influx of people coming here from all over the world – the number of people taking up permanent residence in Dubai increases steadily each month. I don't think you need to spend much time here to find out why. It's a great and dynamic environment. It's built around growth. We're fortunate that our GDP growth is between 4% and 6% consistently. Growth of people through the airport over the past 15 years has been between 7% and 8% on a compound basis every year.

How has the government's approach to aviation shaped the growth of DXB?
The aerospace sector is viewed by the government as a strategic imperative for the growth agenda. It's good to be in an industry where the value is recognised at the very highest level. We've had a dynasty of rulers from the same family since the UAE was formed in 1971. That consistency of vision has been at the heart of the country's success. Earlier in the year, the ruler Sheikh Mohammed launched D33, which is about doubling the GDP, the number of residents, visitors and the quality of what we do by 2033. It's fantastic to have those long-term programmes that everyone is solidly behind.

If you look at the tourism numbers and the hotel beds that have been added to the inventory over the past few years, it's dramatic. We've matched that with being able to add airport capacity. And the airlines have done that by introducing new services. flydubai grew by 19% last year. And nearly 90 of the foreign airlines have grown by 11%. Everyone has contributed to the growth.

People get hot under the collar about the idea that we're subsidised by the government, but we're not. All the entities are run as commercial businesses. The difference is, the government happens to be the owner and the shareholder. So we are allowed to operate in a way that is competitive using the same parameters as any other operation around the world. Of course, the government then reaps the rewards of that and can reinvest in the sector. It's a good model and I don't think there's anywhere in the world that has such a proactive and successful commercial model for its aviation enterprise.

Expansion of Al Maktoum International (DWC) Airport

DWC WILL BE

500% larger than DXB

IT WILL HAVE

5 runways

AND CAPACITY FOR

150 million

ANNUAL PASSENGERS WITHIN THE NEXT DECADE

ULTIMATELY INCREASING TO

260 million

ANNUAL PASSENGERS

How does Dubai achieve its growth goals while also being sustainable?
It's a big challenge and there's no silver bullet. There have to be thousands of incremental steps towards this, and we're taking a significant number. You've only got to talk to younger employees to understand what a key issue it is and how we've got to get behind it in a very big way.

We are blessed with a great degree of sunshine and we've dramatically increased the amount of solar energy we generate. We recently signed a deal with the local electricity supplier to install around 40 megawatts of power-generating panels across the entire estate, across all the rooftops.

We've also replaced hundreds of thousands of bulbs – the runway lighting is exclusively LED now. By next year, we hope to have 80% of all of our waste not going to landfill, and we're converting all of our ground-based vehicles to electricity or hydrogen. The aim is not to license any vehicle to be on the aerodrome that isn't powered by some form of renewable energy within a couple of years. One of the challenges with ground transportation is that, during the summer in particular, we need to drive the air conditioning quite hard to keep people cool. So, I think hydrogen is probably going to be the most practical fuel.

Rather than say that we're going to be carbon neutral by 2050 or achieve a 30% reduction by 2030 (which to me is a little bit of a cop out), I say: Show me what we've done over the past 30 days that demonstrates we've made a positive impact on limiting our emissions and improving the quality of the environment compared to the 30-day prior period. **BT**

WORDS
JT GENTER

THE BENEFITS AND PITFALLS OF THIRD-PARTY TRAVEL PORTALS

How to maximise points while avoiding booking problems

UNLOCKING THE full value of travel rewards takes strategy. From stacking points through shopping portals and card-linked offers to navigating travel credits and partnerships, there are countless ways to boost your earnings. However, booking through third-party portals often comes with hidden downsides.

Savvy travellers know to use rewards cards to earn points and miles on purchases. However, they should also look into ways to stack earnings through bonus points or cashback on purchases.

One of the easiest ways to do this is through online shopping. A bounty of portals reward shoppers with bonus airline miles, hotel points or cashback. To score these rewards, you need to log in and click through the link before completing your purchase with a merchant as you otherwise would.

Many card issuers also offer rewards for making purchases at particular merchants. These offers typically require a cardholder to enroll before making an eligible purchase. For example, American Express members can earn cashback or bonus points/miles on purchases through Amex Offers. Other examples include Chase Offers, Citi Merchant Offers, Capital One Offers and Barclaycard Cashback Rewards.

Travellers should also look for partnerships between travel brands. For example, Marriott and Emirates lets eligible travellers "double-dip" by earning points and miles on flights and stays. Accor has inked similar partnerships with airline programmes, including Flying Blue, Qatar Airways Privilege Club and Qantas.

In short, there's likely some way of boosting your points earnings (or cashback) on almost any purchase you make, whether through a shopping portal or travel partnership. If you're looking to boost your points and miles earnings, it's worth digging in to figure out just how you can do so.

Booking through travel portals

Many card issuers have added new travel-related statement credits as card benefits. Increasingly, these credits require booking travel through a specific portal to be used. Examples include the US$300 travel credit on the Capital One Venture X, the US$50 hotel credit on the Chase Sapphire Preferred, and new Delta Stays credits on Amex-issued Delta cards.

If fully utilised, these credits can offset a significant amount of the card's annual fee. However, travellers should be wary of the downsides of booking through any third-party portal. These include travellers not earning hotel points or elite status credits, and elite members not enjoying perks when booking a stay through a third party.

Other pitfalls might not be as clear-cut. For example, hotels often offer cheaper member-only rates when you book directly through the hotel brand that cannot be booked through a third-party portal. Even if the price is the same, cancellation policies may be more stringent when booking through a third-party portal.

Then there's what happens when things go wrong. The travel portal usually controls the booking until just before your trip. That means you must deal with the travel portal – instead of directly with the airline or hotel – if you'd like to change your booking.

Inherent issues can arise from having an intermediary. For example, I recently used my Capital One Venture X US$300 travel credit to book a flight through Capital One Travel. The rates were the same as those offered by the airline, and I could list my loyalty number right in the booking to get benefits on the trip and earn credits toward requalification.

This seemed like a no-downside way to utilise this travel credit. The Capital One Travel portal confirmed the booking; however, the operating airlines (United and Lufthansa) showed that Capital One Travel booked only three of the four flight segments. When I called to resolve the issue, the only solution I was given was to pay another US$2,000 per person to add the final leg of the trip – even though the portal still showed that the flight was booked and confirmed! Although things worked out in the end, it was a stark example of the unexpected pitfalls that can happen when booking through a travel portal.

> The travel portal usually controls the booking until just before your trip.

If you have a card that offers one of these credits, it still makes sense to make the most of it. However, you should be strategic about doing so. Instead of booking a stay at a brand where you have elite status, try to use a hotel credit to book a stay at an independent hotel.

For flight booking, it's best to keep things simple – such as booking a one-way domestic flight. **BT**

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DEREK PICOT
HOTELIER, CONSULTANT AND AUTHOR

TIPPING POINT

How much cash should you leave and who benefits from a gratuity? New legislation in the UK seeks to clear things up

TIPS HAVE SURELY existed since the exchange of services began – but modern tipping culture has morphed into another beast. We can blame the Americans for the expectation of leaving no less than 20% on the plate, regardless of superior service. But it was hoteliers and restaurateurs who introduced the ubiquitous 'service charge', a device that emerged to ensure the kitchen staff were included as well.

Previously, cash tips were either kept by the server or more usually handed over to the head waiter who held it in a 'tronc' and distributed. The consequence of this is well known to anyone who has served at the bottom of the hierarchy...

Of course, it wasn't long before some unscrupulous operators decided that the service charge was a useful way to add back to the minimum wage and reduce payroll. Service charge occasionally confuses consumers, some of whom feel that in addition to paying the charge on the bill it's also obligatory to leave a cash tip on the plate.

The introduction of the service charge also held some unpleasant surprises for those that applied them. It took a little while, but before long the tax inspector came along and decided that VAT was applicable on items served, including the service charge. Back payments to Her Majesty's Revenue sent some businesses to the wall. It was agreed that, if the customer was left with a choice as to whether to pay the charge or not, it would be 'discretionary' and tax free. Look carefully at your next bill to spot whether that important word is added before 'service charge'. If not, then 20% VAT will have been added for service to the overall tax on the bill.

Soon enough it became clear that the system was a mess, with those doing the actual work missing out on income intended for them. Even professional businesses deducted monies for administration and credit card commission from the overall take before it was distributed.

Time for change

Business travellers will be pleased that the British government approved new tipping legislation in October 2024. The Employment (Allocation of Tips) Act 2023 was originally due to go live last July, but got pushed back to allow more time to prepare.

Does this mean that any money left is destined for those who served you? Yes – well, most of it. For the first time, all monies received, whether on the plate or via the service charge, are to be 100% distributed and the rules for its allocation are to be freely available for all to review. There can be no deduction for administering the distribution. Head waiters are to keep records and also provide the basis on which they distribute cash and to whom.

Of course, the government has been quick to ensure that it takes its share of the tip pot as well. It wants to see all records of how the money was divided up and to whom, making sure that National Insurance and tax has been paid.

This will come as a slight shock to those who are used to being rewarded partially in untaxed cash – everybody from the kitchen steward to the head chef will now have to declare tips in their annual tax return.

All in all, this is good news for the British hospitality industry. You might still ask, however, why we don't just pay people what they deserve from the business profits and abolish the concept of tips and service charge altogether?

While I don't like service charges, tipping extra for good work is generally fair and always enjoyable for staff to receive. The biggest tip I ever received was in 2008 from a guest who was a racing enthusiast: the three o'clock at Ascot. He gave me a fiver and told me to put it on Flashman's Papers at 100/1. It came in first and earned me just short of £500. No tax or National Insurance on that little winner! **BT**

AT YOUR SERVICE New rules mean tips will now be distributed to staff more fairly

> 'Those doing the actual work were missing out'

IMAGE 123R ILLUSTRATION BEN SOUTHAN

Hannah Brandler catches up with Freda Yuan, Director of Coffee at Origin and three-time UK Cup Tasters Champion. Freda travels around the world to oversee the sourcing, sensory analysis and coffee quality for the B Corp brand. Originally from Taiwan, Freda is now based in London

STOP AND SMELL THE COFFEE

ABOVE: San Fernando coffee farm in Chinchiná, a city in Colombia

Q&A

What attracted you to the world of coffee?
Coffee is not that popular in Taiwan, so 11 years ago I came to London to learn from Australian people opening cafés here. I really enjoy the hospitality and community aspect. When people come to a café, I feel like they're in my living room. They've come to relax and I like being part of that. I'm also sharing something that I'm proud of because I've sourced the coffee.

Tasting coffee was also a way of finding myself. It marked the beginning of my recovery from depression and bulimia. The more I began to focus on taste, the more I recovered. I felt more connected and fully present.

You hold a Q Grader certification, what does this mean?
It's an internationally recognised standard that stands for Quality Grader – a coffee sommelier. You score, give feedback and evaluate the coffee. I do it almost every day.

What is the 'cup score'?
To evaluate speciality coffee, we carry out a cupping process. The scoring is between 80 and 100, and the price for the coffee is then based on the quality. Sometimes there is a 1,000% price difference between a cup score of 83 and 88.

The goal is to bring more sweetness into the coffee. If it's a high-quality coffee, we also highlight acidity, as positive acidity makes the coffee more complex and elevates the cup score.

What are the signs of a bad coffee?
You want a balanced bitterness but not one that's medicinal and lingering. Sometimes, if the drying process

has taken place on the ground, it can taste earthy or sandy.

How do you ethically source coffee?
Origin started 20 years ago in Cornwall and its relationship with coffee producers goes back roughly 14 years. The producers we're working with share the same mindset and ethos about sustainable farming. We look at how producers treat the environment and their workers.

Origin is also introducing a system with third-party firm inVeritas to verify its supply chain and responsible sourcing – and provide a report of producers' economic, environmental and social situation. I want to give something back and support local communities. The higher volume of coffee we buy, the more funds we have to support them.

What countries have you visited to source coffee?
Brazil, Colombia, Peru, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Honduras, Burundi, Ethiopia, Rwanda and China.

What are the main challenges in the coffee market?
Coffee is a very price-sensitive business and, right now, the price is really high. There's a lot of uncertainty and coffee prices fluctuate based on their production. One challenge is currency. Coffee buying is priced in USD, so the value of the dollar affects prices. Sometimes we have to exchange from the local currency (Colombian Peso) to GBP and then to USD. Coffee is also affected by geopolitical and international issues. Who knew that the majority of fertilisers are produced in Ukraine? The war made coffee prices spike.

Has climate change had an impact?
Producers are starting to have big droughts. Occasionally, really cold winters freeze the trees – they have to be cut down and it can take another year to grow coffee. Sometimes you have to remove the entire roots – that takes three years to recover. That means less coffee, less productivity and higher cost.

What's been your most rewarding experiences travelling for work?
Last year, a Colombian producer, part of the women-produced Atlas collective, came to London to present her coffee. I gave it a cup score of 83. It was a really good quality coffee variety, but the taste didn't match the potential. I recommended that she pick riper cherries and change her processing tank from concrete to stainless steel. When I returned to Colombia, she had done everything I suggested. It increased to a cup score of 86, I shook her hand straight away and we bought her coffee.

Tell us a bit more about Atlas.
Atlas Decaf is created by 12 women producers in Colombia. These are 100% women-owned farms. Atlas has a significantly lower carbon footprint because the entire process takes place in Colombia. These women live within an hour radius of each other, 30 minutes from the buying point and around ten minutes from the decaf plant. Previously we bought coffee from El Salvador, shipped it to a decaf plant in Germany and back to the UK. To tie in with International Women's Day next month we will highlight women producers and support them to create even higher quality coffee.

BELOW: A visit to San Fernando farm, where Freda met with coffee producer Lina Londoño

What's your coffee order on travels?
A cappuccino because I'll evaluate black coffee. But I'm not a fussy drinker. The best coffee is the one that people enjoy, so I don't tell people not to add sugar or milk.

What's your dream destination?
I'd love to go to Istanbul.

And indispensable travel gadget?
Noise-cancelling wired headphones.

What's your IFE pick?
New movies. **BT**

COFFEE CUPPING WORKSHOP

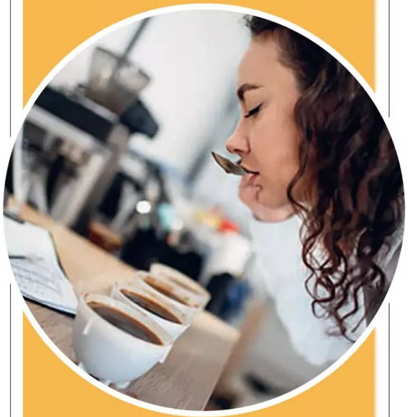
We joined Freda to evaluate six coffees from Origin

Weigh 10.5g of coffee.

Grind the coffee beans and place in a cup. Shake each cup before smelling the variety.

Fill each glass to the top with 220ml of hot water. Have another sniff and wait for it to cool. The coffee will be brewed for four minutes.

Break the crust and skim the foam from the surface. Grab a spoon, fill with some coffee and then slurp like you're drinking soup. Assess the coffee flavours, for example, if you can associate the flavour with chocolate, nutty or fruity notes. Jot down your thoughts.



IMAGES WILL HALAPA; GETTY

ON THE RU

AVIATION AND GLAMOUR HAVE ALWAYS GONE HAND IN HAND. HERE, WE CHART THE EVOLUTION OF INFLIGHT FASHION

WORDS **ALICE HENDERSON**

NWAY

Stylish ensembles of slanted lapels and silky neck ties parade down a carpeted aisle. Some are finished with gilt buttons, others with a shiny brooch. A deft hand has moulded each outfit to its wearer: darts and seams are exact, and cuffs sit neatly around wrists. These garments are the work of expert fashion designers, but instead of heading down a catwalk, they debut at 35,000 feet.

Travel by plane today and you could be in the presence of some of fashion's best talent, with cabin crew done-up in Vivienne Westwood, Pierre Balmain or with tailoring by Savile Row's Ozwald Boateng – but why is fashion and aviation so entwined?

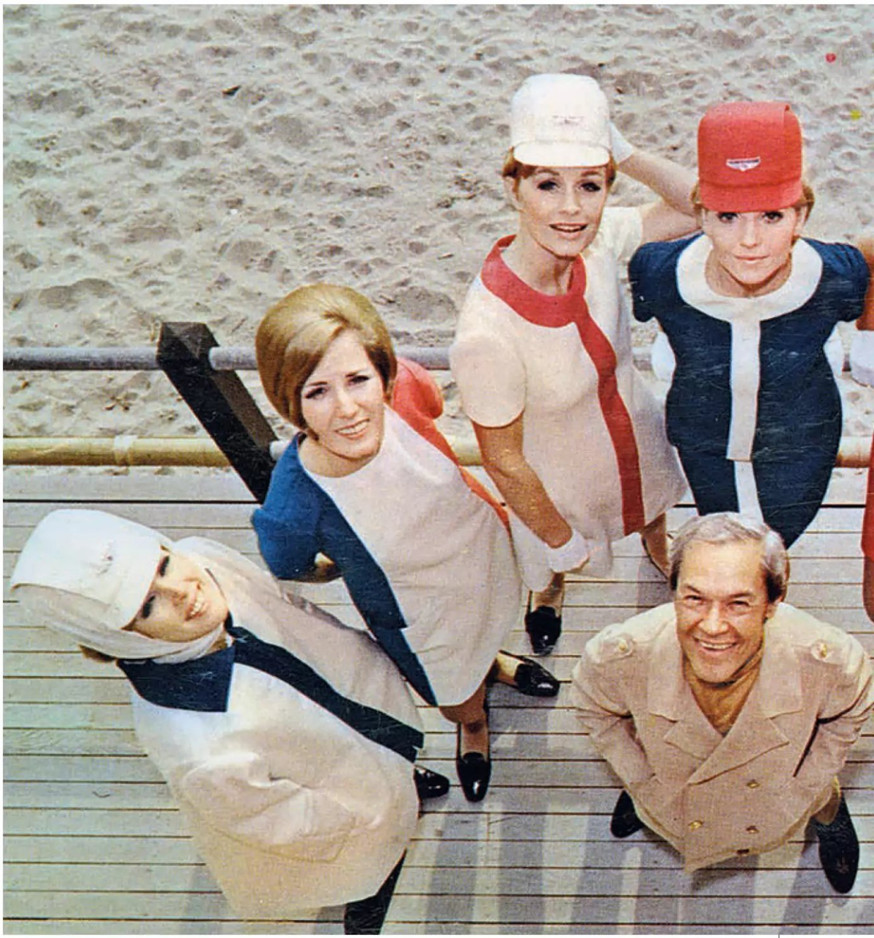
ALTITUDE WITH ATTITUDE

Turning the aisle into the FROW (the prestigious front row at fashion shows) is nothing new. Airlines have been working with fashion houses since the 1950s. Part of the reason stems from the romance of the Golden Age of travel. Working as an air stewardess (as they were called at the time) was considered an impossibly glamorous profession – so, naturally, the outfits had to match.

Air France was the first to put its fashion foot forward. Parisian fashion house, Georgette de Trèze, created a brand new uniform for the Air France crew in 1951. Inspired by Christian Dior's 1947 New Look collection, the fresh ensemble had a nipped waist and form-fitting skirt, which was revolutionary at the time for its celebration of femininity.

Pan Am attendants also got a glamorous wardrobe update in 1959 from famed Beverly Hills couturier Don Loper. The sharp-shouldered military styles were replaced with a fitted jacket and cropped sleeves that revealed the wrist.

Of course, there was a reason why airlines were prepared to invest huge sums of money in dressing their cabin crew in the latest threads. What could be better marketing than these stylish, smiling ambassadors? As travel ramped up during the 60s and 70s, airlines increasingly looked for ways to distinguish themselves.



ABOVE: United Airlines' striking uniform designed by Hollywood costumer Jean Louis

United Airlines, for example, turned to Hollywood costumer Jean Louis in 1968 for a uniform revamp. It was the first time the carrier had worked with a top designer, and was the largest contract awarded in the airline industry to date at US$3 million. Under Louis' direction, hemlines were brought up and a variety of fun-coloured A-line dresses were issued. The coral-red "Hawaiian Sunset" dress featured in a number of amusing advertising campaigns – with flight attendants playing golf and even surfing in the short orange number.

Air France upped its game once again, commissioning Spanish designer Cristobal Balenciaga for a new uniform in 1969. Like sugar plum fairies, its team emerged in pastel shades with a silky ribbon (known as a hatter's tie) fastened in a bow at their neck. An alternative navy suit for winter came with a stylish bomber jacket, hat and headscarf.

Male uniforms however remained much the same: double-breasted and rigid. Airlines had worked out that it was the female attendants who had the most star power, and focused their efforts accordingly.

BEAUTY STANDARDS

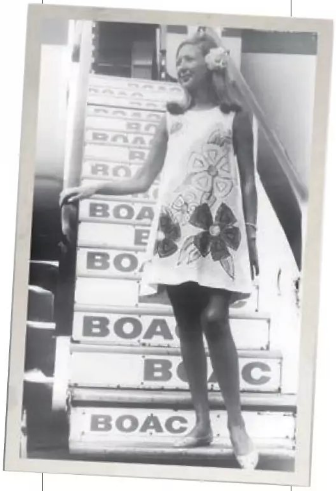
Of course, there was much more to the presentation of cabin crew than their clothing. In 1936, *The New York Times* painted the ideal air hostess as: "Petite; weight 100 to 118 pounds; height 5 feet to 5 feet 4 inches; age 20 to 26 years."

Trainee air hostesses were put through their paces at airline school. On the agenda were posture and make-up lessons, alongside learning how to serve drinks and deal with inebriated passengers. Some

FASHION FAUX-PAS

BOAC's paper dress

BOAC's paper dress was introduced in 1967. Designed to be used on the balmy routes between New York and the Caribbean, BOAC hoped the colours (pink and purple) would get travellers into the holiday spirit. The idea was that they were cost-effective and disposable, but more time was needed at the drawing board. Daphne Oldfield, a retired BOAC cabin crew member, told Aerospace Bristol: "Guys in the aisle would be trying to light your dress with a lighter. Those dresses didn't last long."



carriers even required women to pass a personality test – peppy, educated candidates were preferred.

Standards didn't let up once you were hired: weigh-ins were carried out routinely, and archive images from McConnell Air Hostess School, which trained hostesses for TWA in the 40s, show ladies chewing gum to reduce their double chin.

FUNCTIONAL FASHION

In 1978, airlines were deregulated, meaning carriers were free to offer lower, more competitive fares and relax their marketing campaigns. Female flight attendants were off the hook, and uniform designs became more sensible and practical.

Amy Seadon, head of collections, learning and interpretation at Aerospace Bristol, who worked on the recent *The Fashion of Flight* exhibition, explained that in the 1980s, airlines such as British Airways "wanted uniforms to be as easy to look after and as easy to wear as they could, as well as being fashionable at the time."

Synthetic materials that were easy to care for were chosen over natural fibres. Outfits still moved with the times though: shoulder pads and big ties were rife in the 80s.

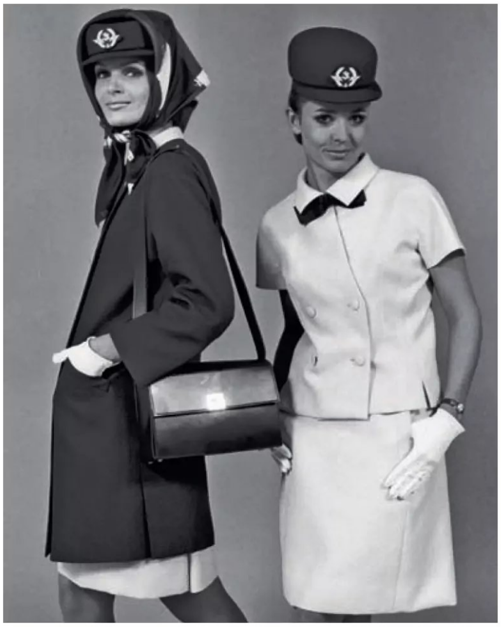
Collaborations with fashion designers have also continued, from the classic military ensemble Julien Macdonald created for BA in 2004 to the latest British Airways outfits from Savile Row tailor Ozwald Boateng.

But if the 60s were all about glamour, then the 2020s are a time for functionality. (Love it or hate it, athleisure has influenced airline fashion.) Increasingly, airlines are considering their crews' comfort as well as style. Female cabin crew at airlines such as Bangkok Airways, ITA Airways, KLM and Japan Airlines can now opt to wear trousers over a skirt, and KLM updated its policy in 2024 to allow staff to wear specially designed trainers by Dutch footwear brand Filling Pieces. Delta meanwhile has released a modern set of uniform prototypes with GPS Apparel, a division under high-street brand Gap Inc.

British Airways' new uniform also offers female staffers trousers and a stylish jumpsuit among an expansive collection of 96 individual pieces.

Virgin Atlantic is a trailblazer in the modern fashion scene of airlines, and an advocate for individuality at work. In 2022, it became the first UK carrier to allow cabin crew to show tattoos (previously airlines had only hired those who could conceal ink under clothing) and launched a gender-neutral uniform policy. Under the new rule book, crew members can choose whichever uniform version they feel most comfortable in, no

BELOW: Air France stewardesses wear the 1969 designs by Balenciaga



IMAGES: UNITED AIRLINES ARCHIVE, ©COLLECTION MUSEE AIR FRANCE. COURTESY OF BRITISH AIRWAYS

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→ matter their gender identity. Crew now have the option of a dramatic red two-piece designed by Dame Vivienne Westwood, complete with a rippling frill-front shirt, or a burgundy suit. All Westwood garments also feature a small hand-drawn wing.

Nichola Feakins, uniforms manager at Virgin Atlantic, said: "Diversity is something we really want to champion at Virgin Atlantic. [The gender-neutral uniform rules] bring a sense of belonging and inclusion, and connect people with our brand... We are now able to recruit from a wider pool and have some fantastic people that come and work for us."

She continued: "I think the passengers have welcomed it with open arms. It brings a sense of inclusivity, not just for our wearers, but for our passengers. They feel like they can be themselves... Everyone is welcome onboard."

For other airlines, consistency is key. Singapore Airlines' uniform is a shining reminder of the past, with the carrier famously sending cabin crew out in a graceful sarong kebaya. The design is recognisable for its use of traditional Asian Batik and classic shape, and comes in four colours for each rank of the female crew. The eye-catching look has been around since 1974, when it was adapted by Parisian couturier Pierre Balmain. Emirates too, have retained a classic style for the last 15 years – designed by Simon Jersey with the shade of warm sand and the iconic sashed hat.

STYLE CONSCIOUS

Another factor influencing fashion design today is sustainability. For Virgin, this means recycling discarded garments down to the threads, and reusing items like handbags and hats that are still in good condition. The current Vivienne Westwood uniform is in fact made from 25% recycled plastics, and a nanotechnology is used in the fabric to ensure a long lifespan.

Many other carriers are also now looking at sustainable fabrics and production. In January 2024, Brussels Airlines unveiled new uniforms, which included unisex pieces and trainers from brands including Atelier Content and Ambiorix, with sustainable credentials including BCI-certified cotton, mulesing free wool, and vegan leather shoes made from cacti and grapes. Meanwhile, Aerolíneas Argentinas created a slimline six-piece range→

'They bring a sense of belonging and inclusion'

FROM TOP: British Airways' new uniform by Ozwald Boateng; BA's style in 1967

IMAGES: COURTESY OF BRITISH AIRWAYS/BEA HARDY AMIES UNIFORM, GETTY IMAGES

(down from nine) in its new collection from Benito Fernandez – which also featured Spandex for extra comfort.

CONTROVERSIAL FASHION

With so many changes, there were bound to be some hiccups. In June 2018, Delta released a set of new, plum-coloured uniforms designed by Project Runway star Zac Posen and manufactured by Lands' End. But just a year later, some female flight attendants began reporting serious reactions to their clothing – including skin rashes, shortness of breath, headaches and fatigue. Doctors who treated those affected said that chemicals used to make the garments stain resistant were the likely cause of their illnesses. Needless to say, the uniform was discarded.

British Airways also fell subject to criticism for its uniform last year. The Ozwald Boateng collection originally included shirts for female attendants made from a fabric so sheer that the airline issued its staff guidance on what underwear to wear. After much backlash, British Airways quickly told employees that it was exploring new fabric options, and that the new blouse would be at least 43% thicker than the initial model.

ABOVE: Brussels Airlines unveils its sustainable, new uniforms in January 2024

RUNWAY TO RUNWAY

The interplay between airlines and the fashion industry has even moved beyond the plane. Saudi

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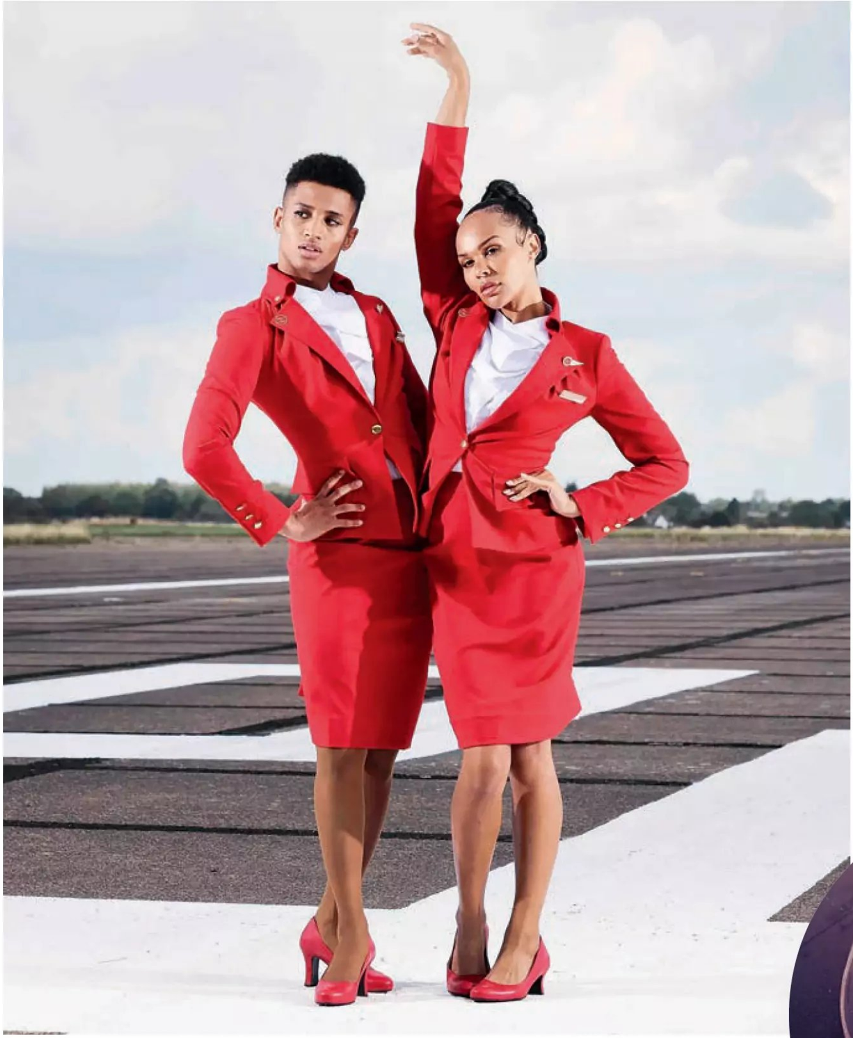
‘Uniforms are both a product of their time and a nifty promotional tool’

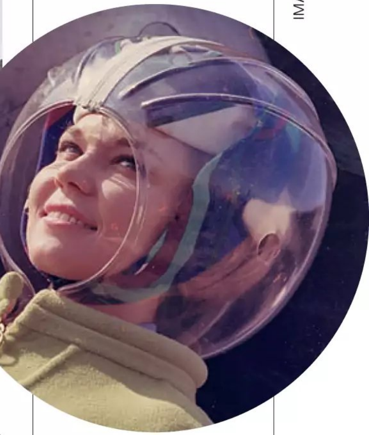


FROM TOP: The gender-neutral Virgin Atlantic uniforms; Air France released five conceptual outfits for its 90th anniversary (below), each depicting an aspect of its heritage

FASHION FAUX-PAS

Braniff Airways' bubble helmet

Astronaut helmet? Diving gear? Think again. This bubble helmet is the work of Italian fashion designer Emilio Pucci, which he devised for the now defunct Braniff Airways in the mid-1960s. Made of plastic, the see-through bonnet protected stylish hairdos while cabin crew waited to board. Reportedly, stewardesses complained that it was difficult to hear anyone while wearing the fish-bowl contraption.



IMAGES: COURTESY OF THE COLLECTION OF SFO MUSEUM, GIFT OF TERRY J. RICE

Arabian carrier Riyadh Air actually unveiled its uniform (or, should we say, collection) during the Paris Couture Week in 2024. Models swept down a runway in indigo pieces, donning dark sunglasses and handbags to complete the look.

IMAGES COURTESY OF BRANIFFINTERNATIONAL.COM

Lufthansa has also blurred the worlds of flight and fashion. The German airline staged a pop-up event in London in November 2024 under the name Unhide/New Worlds of Fashion, with six pieces from designers in Johannesburg, São Paulo and Bengaluru.

Fashion revivals are also becoming an important way for airlines to celebrate their heritage: Air France celebrated its 90th anniversary in 2023 by putting on a display of five original, conceptual outfits at Galeries Lafayette in Paris, which were inspired by different elements of the airline. Virgin Atlantic had a similar idea, releasing an archive collection and photoshoot of the past crimson uniforms in 2024, in fitting commemoration of its Ruby Anniversary.

It's clear that uniforms are both a reflection of their time and a nifty promotional tool. As airlines continue to compete and push boundaries, who knows what creative collaborations we'll see in future. One thing's for sure though: the sky's the limit. **BT**

The Algarve Congress Centre

With panoramic marina views and adaptable spaces, this is an unrivalled venue in the heart of Southern Portugal

THE ALGARVE CONGRESS CENTRE is a standout venue in Portugal's vibrant Vilamoura, seamlessly blending sophistication, flexibility, and Mediterranean charm. Covering an impressive 7,050 square meters, it offers a range of adaptable spaces with 180° views of Vilamoura Marina and the waterfront. Perfect for conferences, product launches, and celebrations, the centre ensures every event is framed by breathtaking scenery and state-of-the-art facilities.

STUNNING SURROUNDINGS

From elegant indoor settings to lush gardens, breezy terraces, and sandy beaches, the venue caters to events of all sizes. Natural light bathes every space, creating a warm and inviting atmosphere. The centre also connects directly to the Tivoli Marina Vilamoura Algarve Resort, which offers 383 luxurious rooms.

Easily accessible from Faro Airport (25 km away), Lisbon, and Seville, the centre is ideally located for both domestic and international guests. Attendees can explore the Algarve's stunning coastline, indulge in its renowned gastronomy, or unwind on golden beaches. Adventurous options like golf, boat cruises, and visits to local wineries add an extra layer of excitement to any gathering. The Algarve's sunny weather, with over 300 days of sunshine a year, ensures the perfect setting for relaxation or team-building activities.

EXCLUSIVE EXPERIENCES

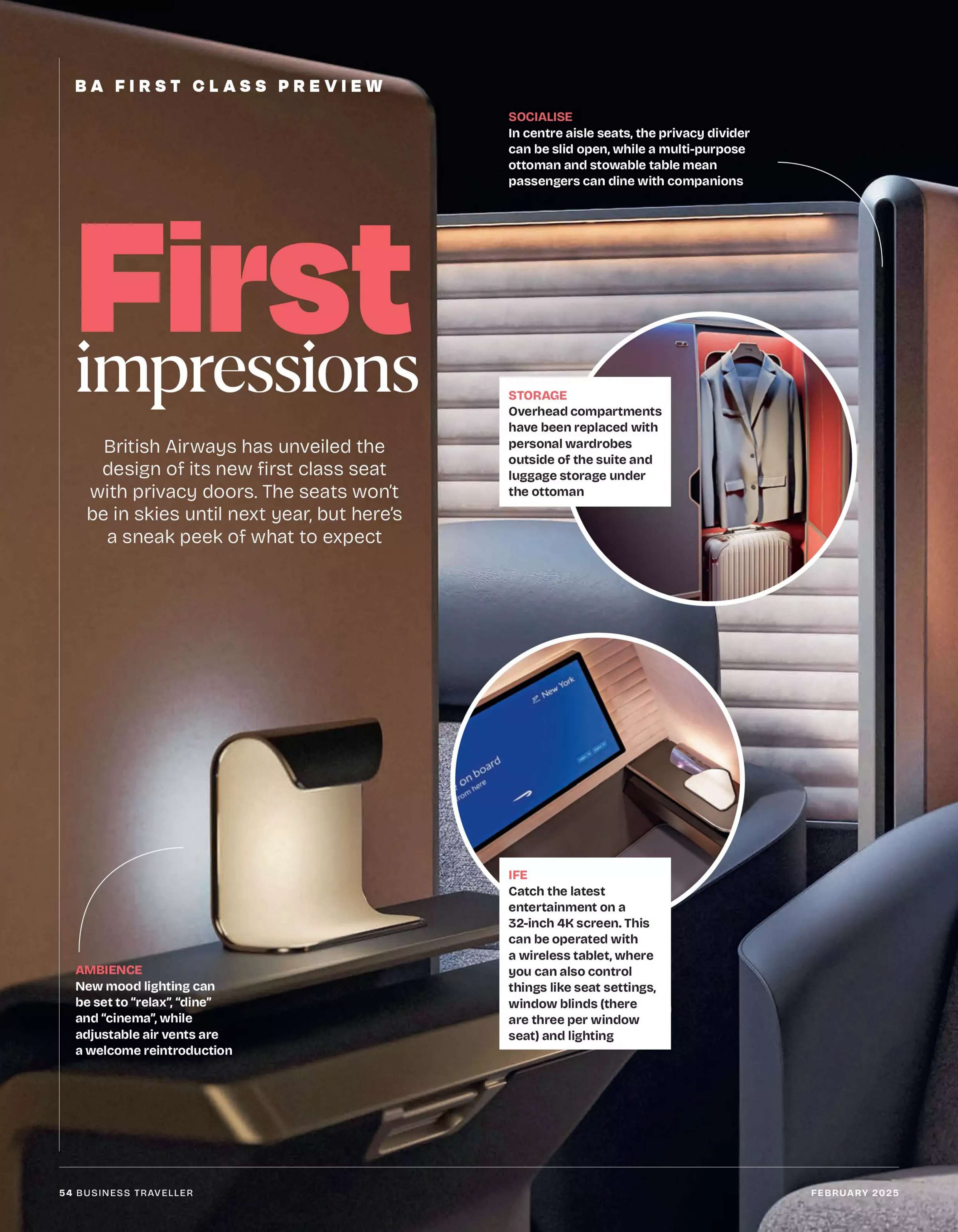
Highlighting its versatility, the centre features grand meeting rooms like the Fénix, accommodating up to 3,000 guests, alongside scenic terraces and unique venues such as the Rooftop Terrace and Purobeach. These exclusive spaces elevate events, offering spectacular views and opportunities for unforgettable moments.

The Algarve Congress Centre is where sophistication, adventure, and relaxation converge—setting the stage for extraordinary events.

centrocongressosalgarve.com

First impressions

British Airways has unveiled the design of its new first class seat with privacy doors. The seats won't be in skies until next year, but here's a sneak peek of what to expect

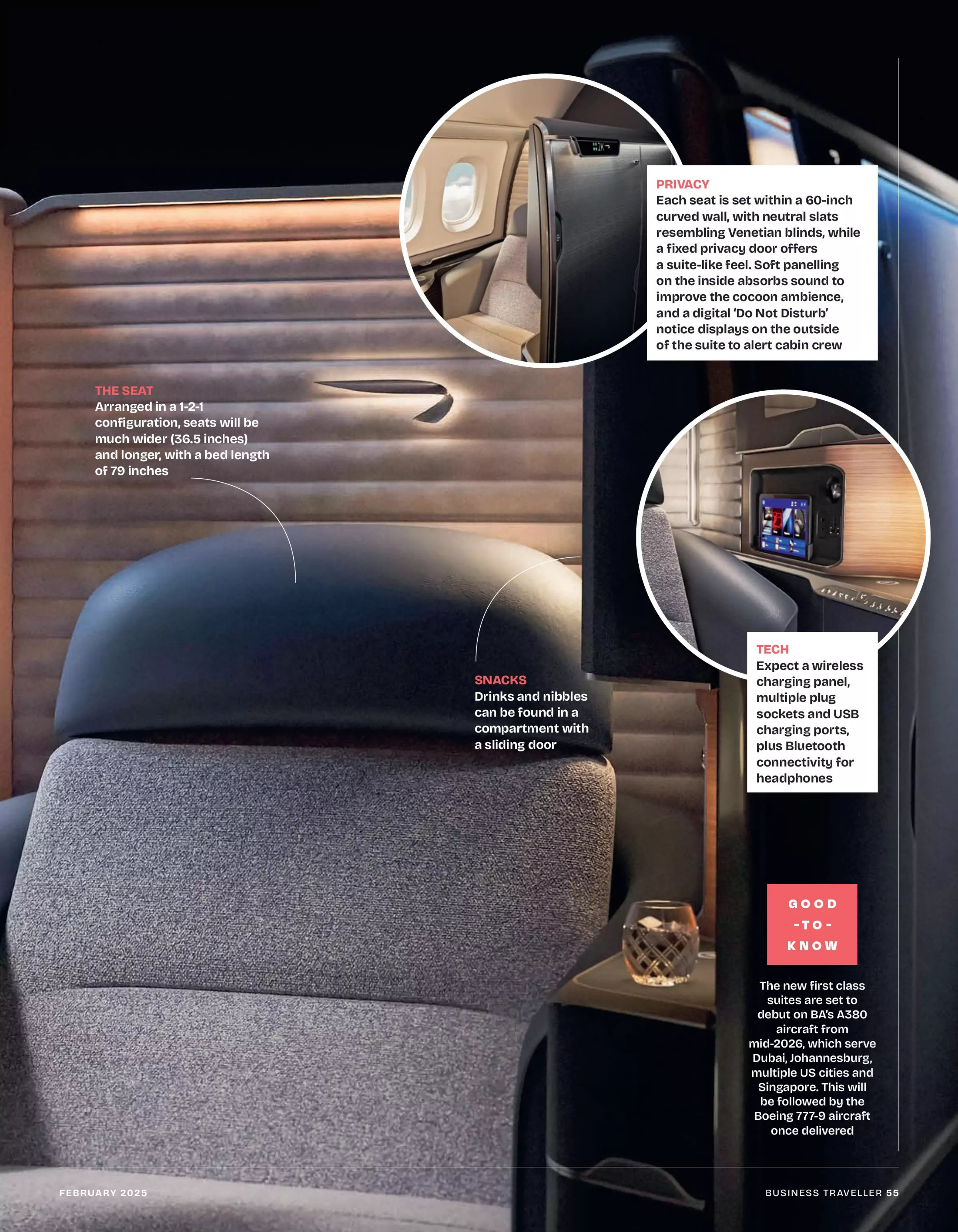


SOCIALISE
In centre aisle seats, the privacy divider can be slid open, while a multi-purpose ottoman and stowable table mean passengers can dine with companions

STORAGE
Overhead compartments have been replaced with personal wardrobes outside of the suite and luggage storage under the ottoman

IFE
Catch the latest entertainment on a 32-inch 4K screen. This can be operated with a wireless tablet, where you can also control things like seat settings, window blinds (there are three per window seat) and lighting

AMBIENCE
New mood lighting can be set to "relax", "dine" and "cinema", while adjustable air vents are a welcome reintroduction



THE SEAT
Arranged in a 1-2-1 configuration, seats will be much wider (36.5 inches) and longer, with a bed length of 79 inches

PRIVACY
Each seat is set within a 60-inch curved wall, with neutral slats resembling Venetian blinds, while a fixed privacy door offers a suite-like feel. Soft panelling on the inside absorbs sound to improve the cocoon ambience, and a digital 'Do Not Disturb' notice displays on the outside of the suite to alert cabin crew

SNACKS
Drinks and nibbles can be found in a compartment with a sliding door

TECH
Expect a wireless charging panel, multiple plug sockets and USB charging ports, plus Bluetooth connectivity for headphones

GOOD-TO-KNOW

The new first class suites are set to debut on BA's A380 aircraft from mid-2026, which serve Dubai, Johannesburg, multiple US cities and Singapore. This will be followed by the Boeing 777-9 aircraft once delivered

SEASONAL SERVICE Bright plates at Spring, set within Somerset House

BUSINESS

WORDS TAMSIN COCKS, HANNAH BRANDLER, TIM PRITCHARD, LINDSEY GALLOWAY

BITES

Dealmaking has always been more of an art than a science. While cities have no shortage of high-rise buildings and crowded conference rooms, the biggest relationships are often built outside of the office.

Whether it's the classic power breakfast, a chef-to-impress dinner or an immersive event that will have clients reminiscing for years, face-to-face time in a memorable location can work wonders to seal current and future deals.

Here we round up a few of our favourite spots to do business in London, Hong Kong and New York.

IMAGES **SPRING**

LONDON

Hannah Brandler and Tamsin Cocks navigate business in the British capital

Breakfast

For a business breakfast in London, **The Wolseley** is a classic choice for a reason. A cross between a Parisian brasserie and a grand-but-cosy Viennese cafe, breakfast here is an institution. (So much so, famed restaurant critic A.A. Gill dedicated a whole book to it.) The large dining room in the heart of Piccadilly is buzzing with early business groups from 7am-11.30am each weekday, with professional, discreet service that won't interrupt the flow of conversation. Fuel discussions with the extensive breakfast menu: you'll find everything from Viennoiserie (Viennese-style pastries) to kedgeree and haggis. Treat yourself to pancakes, have eggs any way you can imagine, or fresh fruits, muesli and yoghurts for a healthy boost. Cold-pressed juices, teas and infusions, and a barista menu will quench all thirsts. Got a sensitive proposal to discuss? Private dining rooms are available for groups up to 15.

Lunch

St. Pancras Renaissance Hotel might be best known for its red brick exterior and Spice Girls-famous staircase, but there's even more to this gloriously gothic venue. **The Midland Grand Dining Room** opened in 2023 – its soaring ceilings, dark wooden Victorian features and plush chairs softened by tropical planting and large windows. The brasserie is perfect for a rendezvous for those travelling into King's Cross St Pancras from elsewhere in the UK or Europe via Eurostar. Menus reflect the internationally friendly milieu, marrying French flavours with seasonal produce – from rich foie gras to hearty cassoulets. A 'menu du jour' is offered from 12pm-2.30pm and 5pm-6.30pm Tuesday to Saturday (two courses at £26, three at £32), and its weekly-changing nature means you'll never have déjà vu. Our tip: order the comté gougères to start off on a promising note. The private dining room seats up to 14 guests.

COFFEE

Redemption Roasters has numerous outlets, but the Drury Lane outpost is a light-filled space with plenty of seating and tables in Covent Garden. There's a pour-over brew bar, speciality coffee menu and freshly baked goods. You'll also contribute to a social cause – it's on a mission to reduce reoffending, with a roastery inside HMP The Mount, a Category C men's prison, where inmates can work and learn skills in roasting, production and logistics.

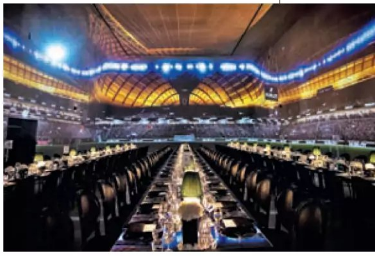
Dinner

Creative hub Somerset House offers respite and inspiration in the city's bustling riverside neighbourhood, so where better to impress clients – particularly those with creative curiosity – than at **Spring**. Set within the building's New Wing, the radiant restaurant fills a spacious 19th-century drawing room with elegant white tableware and floral arrangements. Chef Skye Gyngell takes the helm with menus favouring seasonality and sustainability. Break bread with your colleagues – sourdough upcycled from porridge to be specific – before diving into plates of burrata and grilled fare with enticing veggie accompaniments. Setting it apart from competitors is the innovative Scratch menu, served Tuesday-Saturday from 5.30pm-6.15pm. Here, up to 30 guests can experience the magic of upcycled surplus ingredients via a three-course meal at £40 a head. Spring also became the first single-use plastic-free restaurant in London in 2019. The Salon is an enchanting interior atrium for private dining, seating up to 36 guests – previous clients include everyone from Bank of America to Chanel. Spring is a stone's throw from Charing Cross and Waterloo for out-of-towners.

IMAGES THE WOLSELEY; REDEMPTION ROASTERS; HANSON IMAGES/MORIARTY EVENTS

EVENTS

Vast windowless spaces lacking atmosphere are thankfully a thing of the past for the events industry. A whole host of venues now leverage cutting-edge technology to create immersive worlds that speak to today's experience economy. Among these is **Frameless**, centrally located in Marble Arch and aptly named for Panasonic's wall-to-wall HD projections and dramatic surround sound. Straddling Oxford Street, Mayfair and Hyde Park, the venue is the UK's largest permanent multi-sensory experience and boasts four galleries showcasing oeuvres from the likes of Dalí, Van Gogh, Kandinsky and Rembrandt. For companies, these walls provide a blank canvas and backdrop for storytelling, with previous clients such as the BBC and watchmaker Hublot. Accompanying the experience are dining menus, and clients can get a preferential rate at The Cumberland Hotel.



LOCATED IN LISBON'S vibrant Parque das Nações district, just minutes from the airport, the revamped Oriente Conference Centre is setting new standards in event hosting. With a sleek, sustainable design and cutting-edge facilities, it seamlessly blends modern convenience with a client-centric approach.

VERSATILE SPACES

Spanning an impressive 653 square metres, the centre features 12 versatile meeting rooms accommodating up to 550 attendees. From intimate meetings to grand gatherings, every event is catered to with precision. The redesign prioritises wellness, productivity, and sustainability, evident in its natural tones, ergonomic furnishings, and advanced lighting systems that create a calming, efficient atmosphere.

State-of-the-art technology ensures flawless connectivity and operations, whether you're hosting a corporate seminar or a hybrid conference. Adding to its appeal are flexible spaces and innovative food and beverage options tailored to the unique needs of each client. A wide range of custom services and amenities ensures every aspect of the event is smooth, while the centre's dedication to excellence guarantees satisfaction.

Every detail, no matter how small, is managed by a dedicated team committed to delivering exceptional experiences. Nestled within Lisbon's thriving cultural and business hub, the Oriente Conference Centre's revitalisation is a testament to the future of professional gatherings. With its emphasis on sustainability and client well-being, it is the ultimate venue for creating memorable and impactful events.

E. groups.oriente@tivoli-hotels.com
tivolihotels.com/en/tivoli-oriente

Oriente Conference Centre

Minutes from Lisbon Airport, this venue blends state-of-the-art technology, wellness-focused design, and exceptional service

CROWD PLEASERS The dim sum sharing platters at Duddell's encourage conversation to flow

HONG KONG

Tim Pritchard tells us where to dine in the Asian city

Breakfast

The soft morning light streaming through **The Lounge** at the Four Seasons makes it more than just a breakfast spot – it's a mood setter. Located in the heart of Central, it's ideal for those craving a calm, professional space to kick-start the day without missing a beat. The menu suits every palate, from healthy egg-white frittata to Asian staples (congee) and indulgent portions (Wagyu hanger steak and hash browns). Let's not forget the coffee – strong, smooth and necessary before your 9am pitch. Expect professional service, power outlets and a quiet buzz to stoke your energy levels.

Lunch

Few restaurants in Hong Kong strike the perfect balance between business-casual and wow-factor like **Duddell's**. From its celebrated menu to its art-infused ambiance, it's a masterclass in understated elegance. Interiors blend artsy chic and Oriental opulence, with curated artwork adorning the walls and semi-private seating nooks perfect for confidential discussions. Three private rooms can also be booked for up to 24 guests. The Michelin-starred Cantonese restaurant's signature honey-glazed barbecued pork is a well-regarded crowd-pleaser, while the six-course executive lunch streamlines decision-making, leaving you free to focus on sealing the deal. Its central location ensures easy accessibility for business travellers, and the attentive service means that your dining experience is both efficient and memorable.

IMAGES 2022 NICHOLAS WONG SIXTEEN PHOTOGRAPHY; ELLIOTT CHAU; COURTESY OF AMBER AT LANDMARK MANDARIN ORIENTAL; GETTY IMAGES

COFFEE

A caffeine fix is just the ticket to reignite productivity. Kyoto-born brand **% Arabica** has a few outposts, but head to the gold to-go counter in Tsim Sha Tsui, located on the promenade beside K11 Musea, and grab a Kyoto latte – smooth, creamy and subtly sweet.

Dinner

If you're aiming to impress clients – and let's be honest, who isn't? – **Amber** at Landmark Mandarin Oriental is where you pull out all the stops. From artfully plated seafood sourced from ethical fisheries to delicate vegetable-forward creations, every dish is a certain conversation starter.

Executive chef Richard Ekkebus crafts dishes with precision and creativity, making the two Michelin-starred French restaurant ideal for clients who appreciate the finer things. Don't miss the signature Hokkaido sea urchin and turbot, which is bound to impress even the most seasoned gourmets at the table. The impeccable wine list will have even the toughest negotiators easing up by the second course.

EVENTS

When it comes to hosting large-scale events, the **Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre** is synonymous with Hong Kong's bustling events scene. With over 91,500 sqm of rentable space, cutting-edge audiovisual technology and versatile room configurations, the iconic venue has the flexibility and infrastructure to deliver. Last year, the venue hosted over 800 major events, from conferences to sprawling expos, product launches and extravagant gala dinners. Panoramic views of the harbour as well as seamless connections to the city's transport hubs are further major perks for busy on-the-go travellers. The venue's dedicated events team can help to arrange an event that'll leave your attendees talking long after the final applause.

→

ADVERTORIAL

Regent revamped

Regent Hong Kong – a reimagined haven on Victoria Harbour

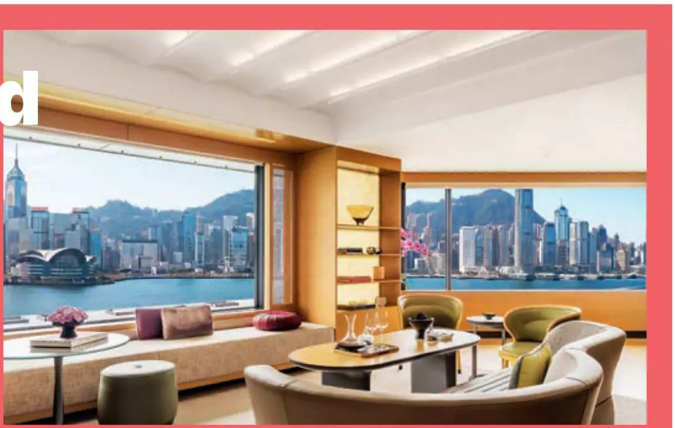
SINCE RETURNING to Victoria Harbour following the most extensive transformation in its history, Regent Hong Kong is garnering global accolades for its sublime design, service and culinary excellence.

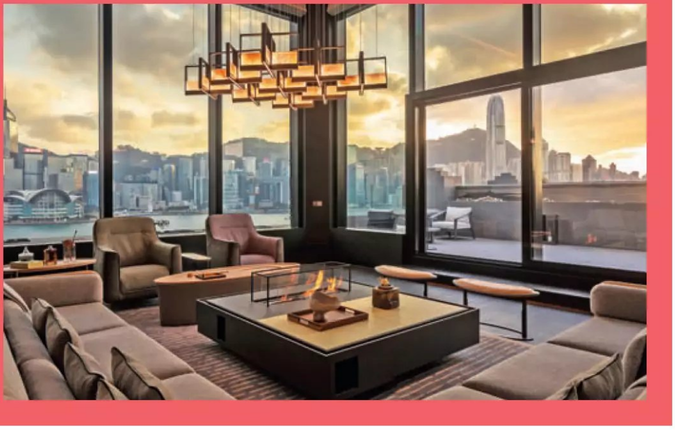
With a serene aesthetic by Hong Kong-born design visionary Chi Wing Lo, the 497 rooms and suites are Personal Havens of tranquillity with customised service by Regent Experience Agents, while a trio of Signature Suites offer one-of-a-kind experiences with private terraces and unrivalled harbour views. Suite guests can enjoy the exclusivity of Regent Club, a luxurious residential retreat where service is on your terms.

Decadent dining awaits at six celebrated restaurants and bars with mesmerising views of the harbour and city skyline.

An iconic white marble staircase leads to the large pillarless Regent Ballroom for glamorous galas, dream weddings and the city's most prestigious events, while ten versatile function rooms with unrivalled harbour views host bespoke meetings and events.

CONTACT
■ 18 Salisbury Road, Kowloon, Hong Kong
■ +852 2721 1211
■ hongkong.regenthotels.com





NEW YORK

Lindsey Galloway takes on business in the Big Apple

Breakfast

For the quintessential New York breakfast, **Pershing Square** offers an unbeatable location, just opposite Grand Central Terminal, where many New Yorkers commute in by train. Housed in a 1919 building under a bridge, the classic Art Deco dining room sees a steady stream of finance and media executives from 7am onwards. (While reservations are recommended, they aren't essential before 8.30am.)

Well-spaced tables and corner booths offer privacy for confidential discussions, while large windows provide natural light and views. Regulars request the booths along the eastern wall (away from the door) for the most discreet meetings. Staff are used to a business clientele, so expect smooth service and promptly delivered bills. The menu includes typical American fare, like the restaurant's famous homemade corned beef hash.

Lunch

Le Pavillon, which opened in 2021, redefines the Midtown power lunch through chef Daniel Boulud's blend of French refinement and New York energy. The 1,022 sqm dining room, set amid a stunning indoor garden with 20-foot olive trees and views of Grand Central Terminal, provides an instant conversation starter for meetings.

Located in one of the city's tallest commercial buildings, the restaurant's direct access from Grand Central makes it ideal for out-of-town clients or commuting executives. The US$95 three-course prix fixe keeps meetings efficient, while Boulud's cuisine, focused on seasonal ingredients and seafood, provides a lighter alternative to traditional business lunches. The garden-inspired dining room, dotted with lush greenery, features natural dividers between tables for possible clandestine conversations.

COFFEE

Stumptown Coffee at the Ace Hotel has an abundance of space rarely found in Manhattan cafes. Expect communal tables, leather armchairs, a dedicated barista bar and seating in the lobby – so you'll never struggle during peak hours. The central NoMad location, steps from multiple subway lines, makes it an easy meeting point. Morning attracts a business crowd, while mid-afternoon offers the quietest atmosphere for longer discussions.

Dinner

Jungsik recently made culinary history as America's first Korean restaurant to receive three Michelin stars, making it an unmissable choice for high-stakes business dining. Chef Daeik Kim's innovative 'New Korean' cuisine transforms traditional flavours into contemporary masterpieces, offering international clients a sophisticated cultural experience. The proximity to both Wall Street and Hudson Square's tech corridor makes it particularly convenient for mixing downtown business crowds.

The refined Tribeca dining room provides an elegant setting for business conversations, while the private dining room (with a separate entrance) accommodates up to 16 guests – ideal for board dinners or confidential client meetings.

The US$250 per person private dining menu can be customised for corporate events, with timing arranged to accommodate business presentations or speeches. For larger gatherings, the main dining room can host up to 35 seated guests or 50 for standing receptions. It's best to book a month in advance for corporate events.

IMAGES GETTY; ACE HOTEL; THOMAS SCHAUER; MOMENT FACTORY, CIPRIANI 25 BROADWAY

EVENTS

25 Broadway transforms the city's history into one of Manhattan's most impressive large-scale event venues, designed by Moment Factory and Cipriani. The former Cunard Building's Great Hall features 60-foot ceilings, soaring marble columns and magnificent maritime frescoes, offering a distinctly New York backdrop. The main space fits up to 995 guests standing or 550 for dinners, while breakout rooms handle parallel sessions. The experienced corporate events team manages everything from global product launches to international conference dinners, with impressive AV capabilities including 17 HD projectors that can cover every surface to create imaginative, immersive canvases. The Financial District location provides easy access to Wall Street firms and major hotels. The loading dock and separate entrance for production teams make event set-up seamless.

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LUXURY TOURISM AT ITS BEST IN ASIA'S LUXURY HUB

HONG KONG

With unmatched access to Asia's affluent markets, Hong Kong is the ultimate destination for luxury experiences and investment

AS A RENOWNED international financial centre boasting the second-highest concentration of billionaires in the world (according to Altrata's latest "2024 Billionaire Census" report), Hong Kong is the place to be to enjoy all things luxury, whether for leisure or business.

The city's appeal as Asia's luxury hub is sure to grow further, with 22.4% more ultra-high-net-worth individuals expected by 2028, according to the Knight Frank Wealth Report 2024.

LEADERS OF
LUXURY
SUMMIT
Robb Report

Coupled with Hong Kong's appeal as the world's meeting place, the city is the best destination to debut the Leaders of Luxury Summit, launched by Robb Report Hong Kong on November 26-28, 2024 at Regent Hong Kong.

"Hong Kong is the gateway for luxury. This is where most of the management decisions for luxury brands are made in the boardroom," said Tak Man, CEO and publisher of Robb Report Hong Kong. "The city's strong connectivity, visa-free policy, and excellent hospitality make it perfect to launch our event here. We intend to bring even more mega events to Hong Kong."

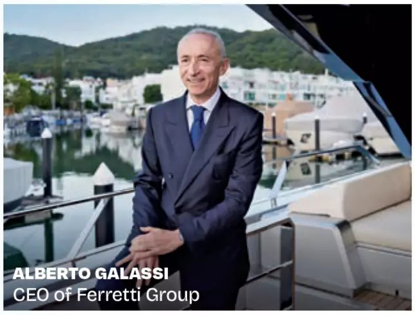
Primed for luxury tourism

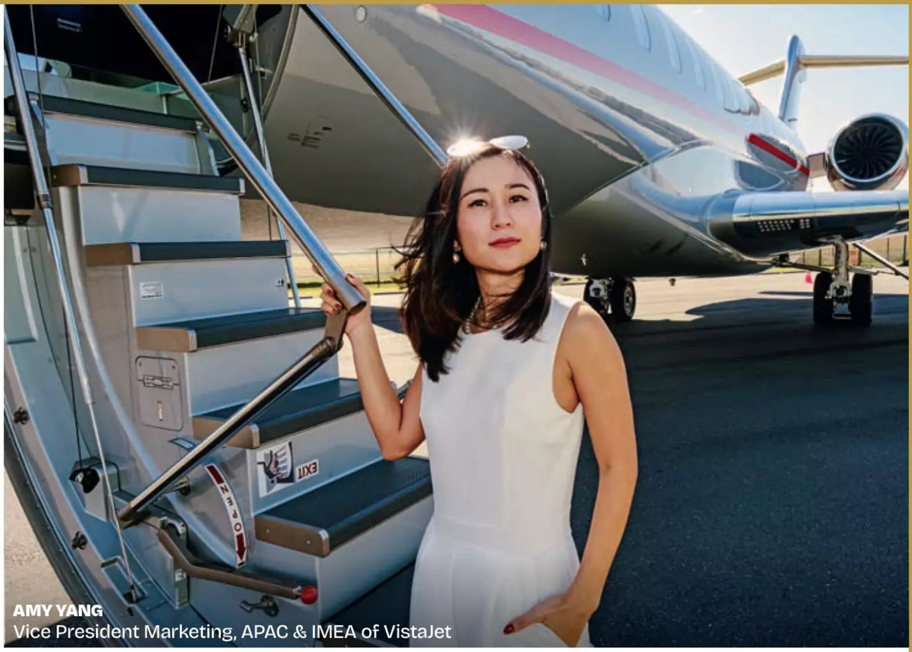
The successful Leaders of Luxury Summit 2024 brought together decision-makers of 500 high-end brands from 16 countries and regions, reflecting the brands' strong confidence in Hong Kong's potential to deliver investment and growth opportunities.

Indeed, Hong Kong offers unrivalled access to the region's luxury markets, most notably Mainland China. "Asia Pacific presents immense opportunities as the main growth engine of the global luxury market," said Dr Y.K. Pang, Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) Chairman. "Mainland China alone is projected to account for 25% of worldwide luxury sales by 2025. For luxury brands, Hong Kong serves as the ideal springboard into this rapidly expanding market."

He maintained that Hong Kong is an indispensable part of the global luxury ecosystem, given the city's strategic positioning, business-friendly environment, and affluent consumers. "Hong Kong's ability to seamlessly blend business and leisure makes it a prime destination for affluent visitors," Dr Pang added.

DR Y.K. PANG
Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) Chairman


ALBERTO GALASSI
CEO of Ferretti Group


AMY YANG
Vice President Marketing, APAC & IMEA of VistaJet

Luxury brand titans convinced of Hong Kong's advantages for investment and tourism

Timing their Hong Kong visit to conduct milestone business and attend the Leaders of Luxury Summit, heads of leading automotive, yacht, and private jet brands extolled Hong Kong's best-in-class attributes for investment and luxury travel.

In town to hand over four bespoke Bentayga EWB Azure to The Peninsula Hong Kong, Bentley CEO Dr. Frank-Steffen Walliser applauded Hong Kong as a showcase for personalisation for luxury. "Personalisation plays a major role in our growth and business. The bespoke Bentayga EWB Azure in Hong Kong showcases the personalisation of a Bentley to other markets. Hong Kong is known for converging high-net-worth individuals and business travellers. The city often sets trends and embraces new technologies, making it an ideal market for exploring the brand's potential."

Taking the opportunity to showcase Ferretti Group's state-of-the-art Super Yacht wallywhy200 at the Hong Kong International Boat Show, held at the same time as the Leaders of Luxury Summit 2024, Ferretti's CEO Alberto Galassi pinned Hong Kong as ideal for investing in luxury brands and yacht tourism. "Hong Kong always plays an important role for Ferretti Group. The city's stunning architecture, impressive skyline, beautiful sea, high-quality hotels, and people, all contribute to Hong Kong's status as a global luxury hub, not just for yachts but for all aspects of life. Hong Kong has the islands, the beaches, and the possibility to go from Kowloon to Hong Kong on a yacht. With more infrastructure, Hong Kong has a huge potential to develop yacht tourism because the city is unique like nowhere else."

A speaker at the Leaders of Luxury Summit 2024, VistaJet Vice President Marketing APAC & IMEA Amy Yang was excited about the enormous opportunities for growing private jet travel via Hong Kong. "Hong Kong is home to many successful entrepreneurs and the Asia headquarters of multinational companies. Its strategic location as the gateway to Mainland China, bridging East and West, provides huge opportunities for business and tourism. The city has the best infrastructure in Asia to facilitate the growth of private aviation. We are very excited that the city is investing in expanding the private aviation terminal to accommodate growing demand in the industry."

DR. FRANK-STEFFEN WALLISER
CEO of Bentley

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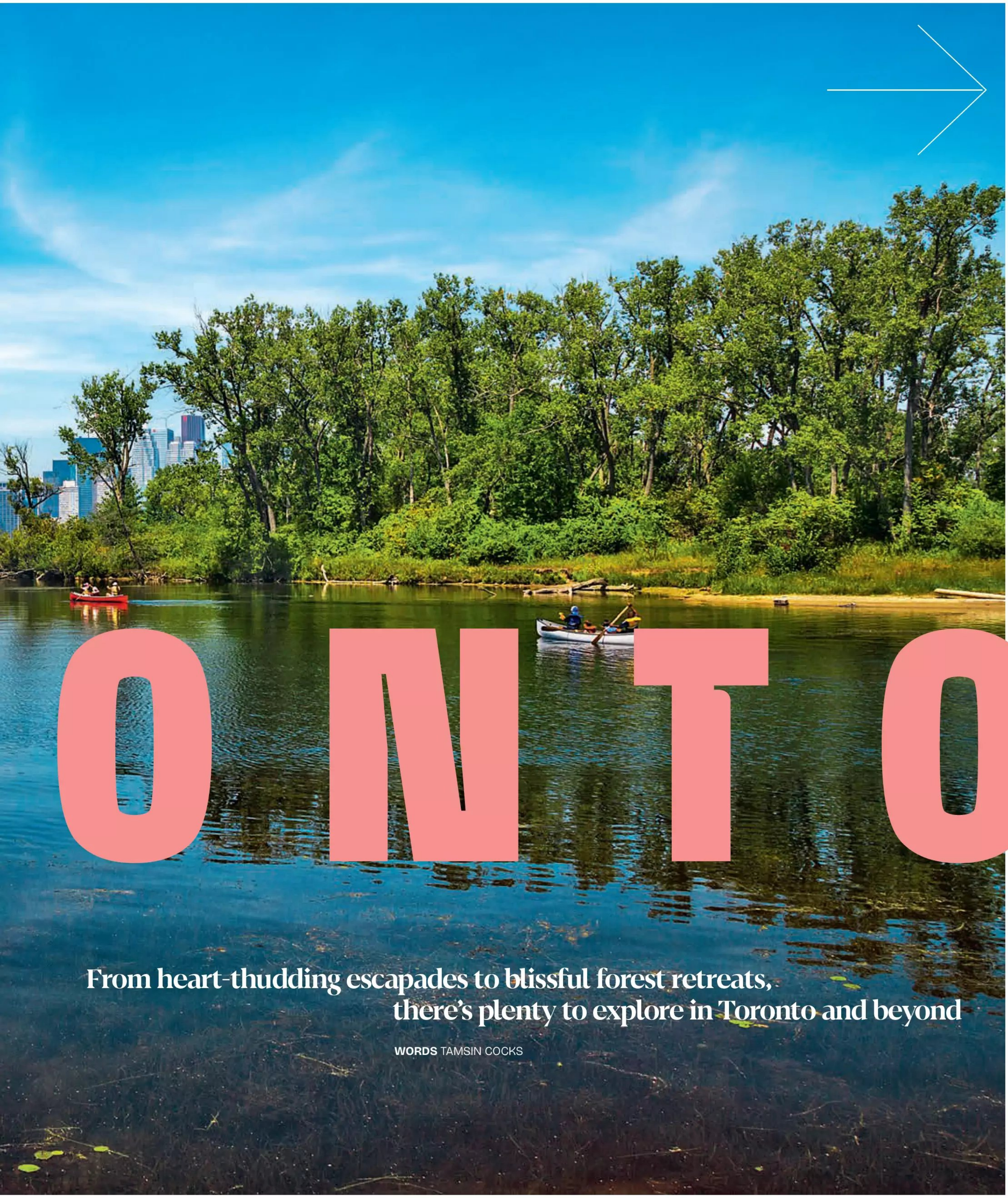
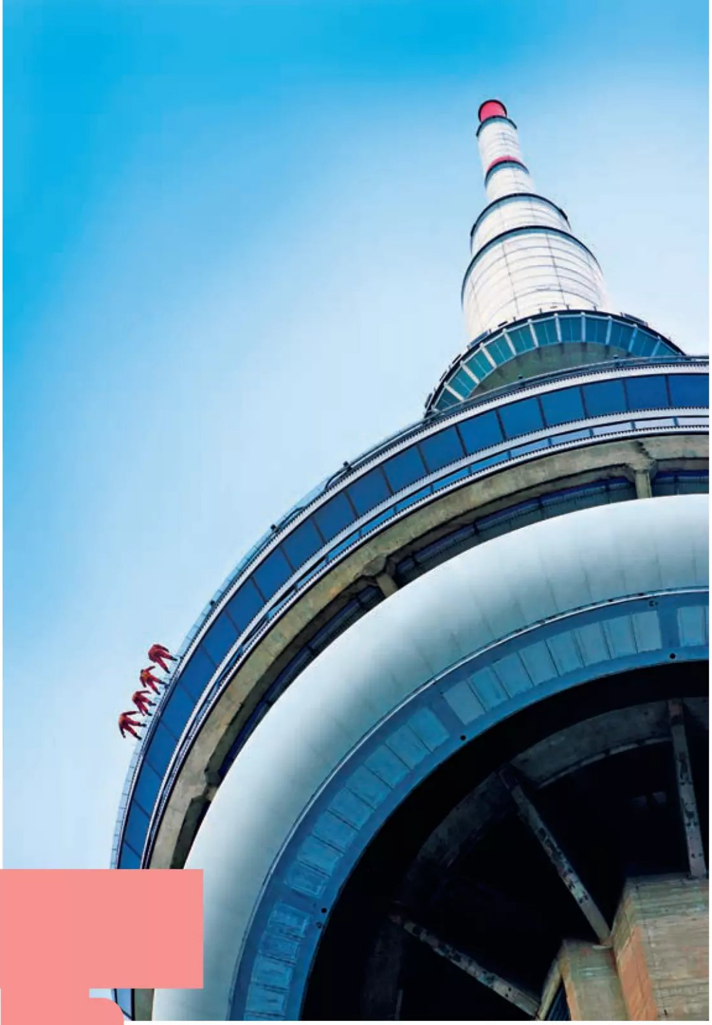
Time out in TOR



ONTO

From heart-thudding escapades to blissful forest retreats, there's plenty to explore in Toronto and beyond

WORDS TAMSIN COCKS



FROM TOP: The CN Tower is a go-to destination for views, food and thrills; historic charms in the Distillery District

TORONTO MIGHT JUST be the perfect place to achieve the elusive work-life balance: cut deals in the financial district by day, cut loose in the beating heart of King Street West by night, and unwind in breathtaking natural beauty at the weekend.

The largest city in Canada, and the capital of Ontario, this multicultural hub is friendly, vibrant, industrious and well-connected. Toronto Pearson International Airport, the largest and busiest airport in Canada, handled 44.8 million passengers in 2023, with over 100 international routes. From 30 March, UK passengers can look forward to the relaunch of Virgin Atlantic's daily Toronto service – its first route to Canada in over a decade, which will complement existing UK services from Air Canada, Air Transat and British Airways.

Whether you can only escape meetings for an afternoon, or you're planning an entire vacation, Toronto has plenty of sky-high thrills, cultural gems and natural wonders to compete for a place on your itinerary.

Top attraction

Toronto's skyscraper-studded skyline is dominated by one standout attraction: the CN Tower. At 553 metres tall, it held the record for the world's tallest free-standing structure for 34 years, until Dubai's Burj Khalifa surpassed it in 2009. While the tower serves as a working telecommunications hub for Canadian TV and radio, it's also one of Toronto's top tourist attractions, with observation decks and a revolving restaurant.

If you enjoy the sensation of impending doom, then the CN Tower EdgeWalk is for you. Suspended 356 metres above the ground, it remains the world's highest external building walk – and is not for the faint of heart. After an ear-popping lift to the platform, the door opens to a 1.5-metre platform – with no barrier to steady yourself as the wind whistles past. You're harnessed up to cables that could technically support the weight of an elephant or two – but try telling that to your nervous system.

Thankfully you're rewarded with an incredible vantage point of the city (provided you can open your eyes), including the Toronto Islands in Lake Ontario – the location of Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport. As if standing on the edge of the sky wasn't terrifying enough, guides have a series of "fun" challenges for you to complete. Cutesy names such as "toes over Toronto" belie how hard it is to inch over the platform, while you're also dared to lean backwards into the abyss. If you manage it, you'll be met with a surge of adrenaline and a sense of achievement, plus social media kudos thanks to the option to purchase photos and video of your experience (EdgeWalk costs $225 CAD including tax).

Touring Toronto's neighbourhoods

Back on terra firma, and once legs have stopped wobbling, it's time to explore Toronto's vibrant neighbourhoods. Once home to the historic Gooderham & Worts Distillery, the Distillery District is now a charming cultural hub. Cobblestone streets and restored 19th-century buildings house independent boutiques, art galleries, dining spots and eccentric shops, making it a haven for creatives and visitors alike.

Highlights include the Spirit of York distillery, where you can sample vodka, gin, rum and whisky made on site, and Soma for expertly crafted artisan chocolate. You could spend hours in Bergo Designs, a huge emporium of quirky homeware and gifts sourced from all over the world. Dining options range from French haute cuisine at Cluny to vibrant Mexican cuisine at El Catrin Destileria – complete with sides of fried crickets and an exhaustive tequila menu.

There's also a rotating calendar of live events around the main square, and you can take a deep dive into the area's heritage with a history walking tour. Plus, the area is a great setting for corporate gatherings – the Fermenting Cellar is

→

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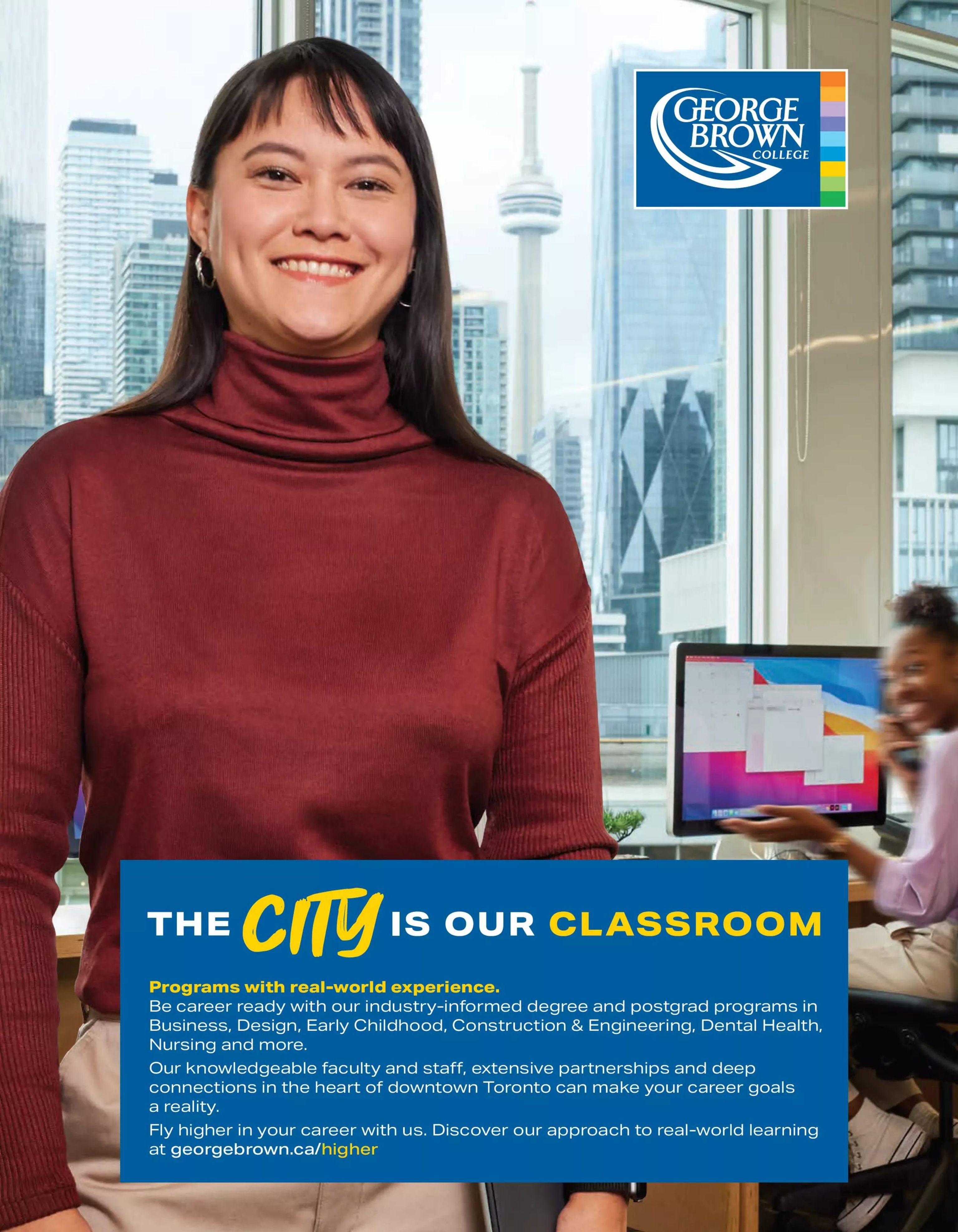

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→ popular for all sorts of exhibitions and events, most recently hosting a sensory experience by Illuminarium.

For a completely different vibe, Kensington Market is one of Toronto's most eclectic neighbourhoods, known for its bohemian atmosphere. Tucked away near Chinatown, the area is a true melting pot of flavours and influences. It's the kind of place where synagogues sit happily next to cannabis shops, and the famous "garden car" (an abandoned car that was filled with potted plants by residents) has been tended to for nearly 20 years. Wander down the colourful narrow streets filled with boutiques and famous vintage stores before diving into the multicultural eateries – fusion spots range from Rasta Pasta, where you'll find a jerk chicken alfredo, to sushi pizza and Korean hotdogs. The neighbourhood is also home to colourful murals, street art and a thriving community of local artisans, making it a hub for creative expression. On weekends, the area is especially lively, with vendors selling fresh produce, flowers and handmade goods.

Day trip beyond the city

Thundering Niagara Falls is a bucket list item for many and, being just an hour's drive outside of Toronto, it's an easy one to tick off with a spare morning or afternoon. The stunning Horseshoe Falls marks the border between Canada and the US, with the views from the Canadian side unparalleled. It's quite something to witness the astounding spectacle, with

BELOW The lovingly nurtured "garden car" in Kensington Market

KENSINGTON
MARKET

EATING OUT

FEASTS AND BEATS

MAIN Paris Paris **INSET** Oretta King West

For the best dining and nightlife in Toronto, head to King Street West. This area, comparable to New York's SoHo, offers a selection of upscale restaurants and bars.

Vaulted ceilings and Art Deco glitz create an impressive dining spot for authentic Italian eatery **Oretta**. Explore all the Italian classics, with most dishes available as gluten-free versions. Can't choose? Try the chef's seven-course tasting menu ($78 CAD).

Paris Paris, meanwhile, is a cool, modern bistro offering a relaxed yet refined setting with urban-chic decor and long sharing tables. The menu is based on seasonal, local ingredients, with everything from cheese and charcuterie to fresh seafood – the lobster spaghetti is a must. Come for light afternoon bites and stay to dance the night away.

Alternatively, Mexico meets the Mediterranean at 1 Hotel's cool **Casa Madera** restaurant. Bold flavours and colourful sharing plates in a sultry setting draw in a sociable crowd, with an inventive cocktail list and live DJ sets to keep the party going. Mouthwatering menu items range from fresh ceviche to a seasonal rotating taco menu (keep your eye out for the jackfruit al pastor), plus truffle risotto and the house Tomahawk steak.

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‘It’s quite something to witness the astounding spectacle, with 3,160 tons of water flowing over the edge every second’

→

3,160 tons of water flowing over the edge every second. While the free roadside views are astonishing, you can ramp up the volume with the ‘Journey to the Falls’ experience, which takes you into the tunnels 38 metres below the waterfall. Alternatively, take a boat tour for a spray-soaked adventure that will give you an up-close and personal encounter.

If you have time for a full day trip, it would be remiss not to explore Niagara wine country. Immerse yourself in the art of wine production at the picturesque Peller Estates Winery. The one-hour winery tour dives into enormous oak barrel cellars and a freezing ice room for samples of the region’s unique ice wine. (Its secret? Frozen grapes are picked and pressed at night, so the sun doesn’t thaw them.) There’s a healthy amount of tasting to be done, meaning you emerge primed and ready to visit the gift shop. Tours can be followed by a wine-paired lunch in the formal dining room, with stunning views over the vineyards and manicured lawns.

You should also visit Niagara-on-the-Lake. With 19th-century architecture, a year-round Christmas store and an old-fashioned apothecary, it feels straight out of a Hallmark movie. History buffs can also enjoy exploring the town’s notable role in several military battles, while culture hounds should plan to coincide a visit with the Bernard Shaw festival, which takes place every April-October.

Escape for the weekend: Algonquin National Park

If anywhere offers the prime opportunity to abandon the city and get away from it all – Ontario does. The province is famed for its stunning natural beauty. Algonquin National Park, in particular, is known for its brilliant display of fiery autumnal leaves, which have inspired countless artists. In fact, before you get lost in the wilderness, you should first make a pit stop at the McMichael Canadian Art Collection in Kleinburg. This beautifully curated gallery is a true homage to nature, paying particular attention to indigenous art as well as some of Canada’s greatest artists – the Group of Seven. These seminal landscape painters rejected studios, preferring to camp and paint in the great outdoors – and no wonder, with such a muse on their doorstep. The stunning works showcase beauty, skill and insights as to how the landscape has shaped an artistic generation. Plus, a quiet moment of contemplation in the meticulous galleries is the perfect place to shake off city stress, before ditching it completely.

Arowhon Pines resort offers the perfect antidote to city life. With a serene lakeside setting deep in the forest (so deep you can say goodbye to your internet signal), the woodland retreat beckons those looking for rest and relaxation. Rustic cabins come in different shapes and sizes, with modern lakeside cabins offering private bathrooms and a wood-burning stove. As for what to do – it’s all about freedom and nature. The area is teaming with hiking trails, flora and fauna. Take an icy swim in the lake, explore the scenery in a kayak or book the resort hot tub. Join fellow guests for movie nights and a game of chess in the common area, or cosy up in front of a fire pit and toast marshmallows. Meals are enjoyed in the main lodge around a crackling fire, with a hearty spread of salads and à la carte mains. The only thing missing is a bar – so stock up on your own relaxation potions. You’ll also want to brush up on your knowledge of what to do if you spot a bear – and what to be aware of during moose mating season!

The resort is currently buried under snow and hibernating, but bookings are open from 7 June. **BT**

FROM TOP Tourists enjoy awe-inspiring views of Niagara Falls; the Algonquin National Park

IMAGES GETTY IMAGES, COURTESY OF DESTINATION ONTARIO, CHUCK ORTIZ, ORETTA KING WEST

CONTEMPORARY JAPANESE

Myazu, Riyadh

Myazu has been designed with the precise needs of a cosmopolitan market in mind, bringing you a unique, world-class experience in an extraordinary setting. Myazu's philosophy revolves around attention to detail, tangible in its selection of the finest ingredients and its expertly trained team. The mood at Myazu is enhanced with a curated playlist and intricate wood panelling for a stimulating, yet relaxed atmosphere.

Musad Bin Jalawi St, Riyadh 12244,
+966 9200 09686
enquiries@myazu.com
myazu.com

CHINESE

Gouqi, London

Embark on a culinary journey at the esteemed Gouqi restaurant. Led by Michelin-Star chef Tong Chee Hwee, Gouqi promises a luxury dining experience like no other. Explore Gouqi's authentic Chinese cuisine with specialties like Peking duck or a dim sum platter. With a capacity of 100 covers, two private dining rooms, and an Asian-inspired cocktail bar, Gouqi offers an ideal setting for exclusive events. It is a rising star that you won't want to miss.

25-34 Cockspur St, London, SW1Y 5BN,
020 3771 8886
reservations@gouqi-restaurants.co.uk
gouqi-restaurants.co.uk

CONTEMPORARY IRISH

Suesey Street, Dublin

Located a short stroll from St. Stephen's Green, Suesey Street is one of Dublin's most elegant restaurants. Serving up high-end, contemporary Irish dishes packed with local ingredients, this modern restaurant offers a warm environment that's perfect for all occasions. From romantic fireside dinners to business meals, Suesey Street is the perfect place to enjoy delectable food, splendid drinks and an unbeatable atmosphere.

26 Fitzwilliam Place, Dublin 2,
+353 1 669 4600
info@sueseystreet.ie,
sueseystreet.ie

INTERNATIONAL

Mountain Hub Social Dining, Munich

Open daily in Hilton Munich Airport, Mountain Hub Social Dining is the perfect spot to start or end your trip to Germany. Modern Bavarian hospitality meets alpine-inspired, international cuisine for an authentic and memorable mealtime. Each dish is an embrace of culinary excellence, with a focus on fresh, regional ingredients. Whether you're just stopping by or you've scheduled ahead, this place offers a range of plates to suit all palates.

Hilton Munich Airport, Terminalstrasse Mitte 20, 85356 Munich Airport,
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Your mobile wellbeing hub
Bringing mental health support to your community.
Silence of Suicide

1 Day Suicide Awareness and Prevention Course (Warwick District Council)

"Very informative, engaging and comfortable"

"Session was great & pitched at the right level"

"I felt very safe to be vulnerable, great content, thank you!"

"A great session - I've learnt so much!"

We have had a 150.50% increase in calls into the SOS phone line overall when we compare 2023 vs 2024.

2 Day BRAVE Suicide Awareness and Prevention Course (Warwick District Council)

“Elliot is one of the best trainers. I feel lucky I was able to attend his 2 day course”

“The training was fantastic I thought all aspects covered and the conversations were extremely valuable”

“Elliot is a fantastic trainer and not scared to share his experiences”

Scan to find out more info on becoming an SOS Community or Business Partner

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“The SOS mobile hubs have been an invaluable addition to our college's freshers' and wellbeing events. Their team has consistently engaged with our students and staff in meaningful conversations, creating a welcoming and safe space for students to learn about SOS's services or share their own experiences. We would welcome more frequent attendance and value the unique service of their approachable and professional team.” – WCG (Warwickshire College Group)

AIRLINE REVIEW
Gulf Air Boeing 787-9 business class

HOTEL REVIEWS
Hôtel Plaza Athénée, Paris + more

CAR REVIEW
Polestar 3

SPA REVIEW
Dior Spa, Paris

Review

Putting business travel to the test

HOTEL REVIEW

Pan Pacific Singapore

New renovations give this Singapore favourite a fresh reason to visit

IMAGES MASANO KAWANA/PAN PACIFIC

HOTEL Review

WORDS
ALICE HENDERSON

What's it like?

At 38 storeys tall, with 790 rooms and eight dining/bar spaces, Pan Pacific Singapore is a hotel of epic scale. It's one of two Pan Pacific hotels in Singapore and is located in the Marina Bay area, close to the central business district, and just a 20-minute drive from the airport.

It's grand in design, too. Gleaming surfaces, elegant columns and a central water feature create a graceful yet striking entrance lobby, while an impressive central atrium stretches overhead.

Staff throughout the hotel are warm and attentive.

Rooms

The hotel underwent a S$30 million renovation in 2023. In all Executive Marina Bay Rooms and Deluxe Rooms (entry-level), beds were repositioned to face the prime view and balconies were reduced in size to create more floor space. Filtered water taps were also added in all bathrooms across the hotel to reduce the use of plastic.

I stayed in an Executive Marina Bay Room. Lots of neutrals created a sophisticated space, with light-coloured fabrics and warm lighting. Furnishings included a curved sofa, coffee table, long desk with conveniently placed plug sockets and lamp, and a coffee machine.

The bathroom was modern and spacious. Strangely, there was an alcove in the wall for a suitcase – perhaps a convenient placement for some, but slightly unhygienic.

Facilities

Within the hotel there are seven restaurants (one is a tenant restaurant), a local food marketplace and a bar. Options range from afternoon tea to authentic Japanese cuisine. The Pan Pacific Club Lounge on the top floor serves a Champagne breakfast, but is only accessible to guests staying in Club rooms and suites.

Most notable is the all-day buffet restaurant, Edge. Breakfast here is a dynamic affair: tables upon tables laden with food from all regions of the globe. Fresh fruit, English cooked breakfast items, American muffins, noodles and even an omelette station with a dedicated chef.

The hotel is well equipped to host both corporate and social events. The Pacific Ballroom is the hotel's largest events space, able to seat up to 650 people. It has a private driveway, drop chandeliers and AV technology.

Other facilities include St. Gregory spa, an outdoor pool, 24-hour fitness centre and a children's area. **BT**

GOOD-TO-KNOW

To reach the upper floors, take the external lift. (Internal lifts only give access up to floor 22.)

VERDICT

Pan Pacific Singapore packs a lot into its 38 floors – and does it all very well. Meetings, dining, socialising and relaxation are all enjoyable under its roof, thanks to opulent interiors and a superb team of staff

BEST FOR

Close proximity to Singapore's central business district and excellent hospitality

DON'T MISS

Breakfast in Edge restaurant

PRICE

From S$486 (£285) per night

CONTACT

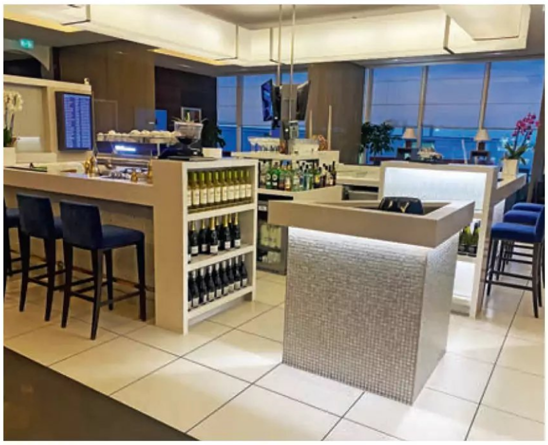
7 Raffles Blvd, Singapore 039595, +65 6336 8111, panpacific.com

IMAGES CHRIS CYPERT

WORDS
ALICE HENDERSON

Gulf Air Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner Falcon Gold

We experience the carrier's London-Bahrain-Singapore connection, which launched in October 2024



Boarding

Gulf Air now offers connecting flights from London and Manchester to Singapore via Bahrain.

Flights from the UK hubs to Bahrain have been in service since the 1970s and 2022, respectively, but the new leg gives travellers another way to reach Singapore – with very competitive pricing.

The London-Bahrain flight lasts 6 hours 40 minutes, with a 4 hours 45 minute stopover before the onward 7 hours 35 minute flight to Singapore.

Falcon Gold (business class) passengers have access to the excellent namesake lounges in London Heathrow Terminal 4 and at Bahrain International Airport – plus the SATS Premier Lounge at Changi Airport T3.

Boarding was smooth and on time. Falcon Gold passengers were offered juice, water, Champagne or coffee, as well as a hot or cold towel.

The seat

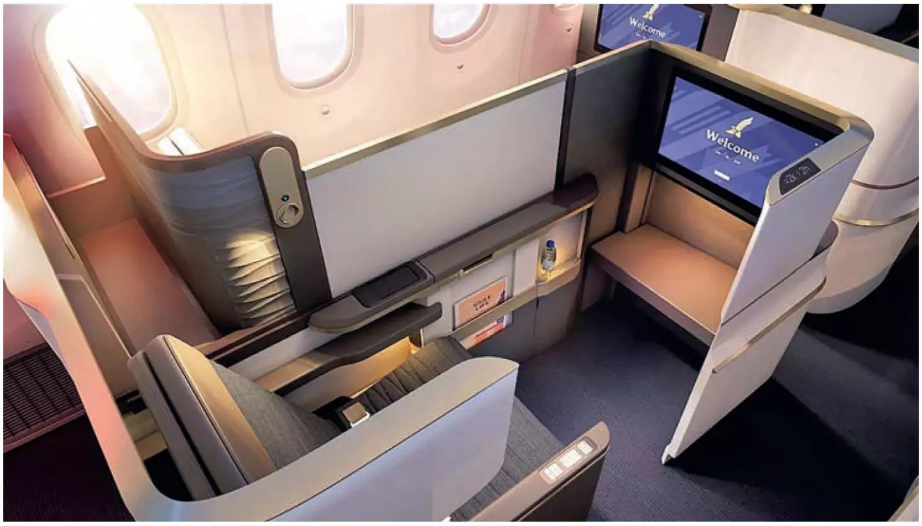
The aircraft has 26 Falcon Gold seats in a 2-2-2 configuration, all of which have direct aisle access and a pitch of 80-90 inches. Seats lie completely flat and extend towards an ottoman for added length. Mine was nicely padded, and wide enough for me to sleep on my side. There isn't a door like on some other carriers, but relative privacy is assured by the staggering of seats – window seats are set slightly further forwards than aisle ones.

Two consoles are attached to the seat, with easy-to-operate controls, though the screen remote was awkwardly placed on the armrest. Two integrated USB-A ports were also difficult to reach, below the armrest nearest the aisle.

A generous amenity kit was provided, while storage space was limited to under the ottoman.

GOOD -TO- KNOW

Singapore Changi Airport's biometric systems allow for a speedy passport control



The flight

Wifi was free, but unreliable and intermittent (and none available from Bahrain to Singapore).

The first meal service began at 1140. I enjoyed a salad starter, followed by a pleasant and filling vegetarian spiced pasta dish (which I pre-ordered). Dessert included cakes, fruit or crackers – plus afternoon tea at 1440.

Disappointingly, cabin crew woke sleeping passengers at mealtimes (even at 0055) unless they had a 'do not disturb' sign set on their screen.

We landed in Bahrain at 1850 local time, with fast-track security for Falcon Gold passengers.

The Singapore flight, also operated by a Dreamliner, departed at 2355. There were two meal services, and pyjamas were available upon request.

Arrival

We landed in Singapore at 0754. I had completed my SG arrival card ahead of the trip, but there was a station to complete these too. **BT**

VERDICT

Gulf Air's Falcon Gold offers a seamless experience from check-in onwards, with a thoughtful seat design that allows for privacy and convenient aisle access. The layover was on the long side, but the lounge offered a comfortable wait. Overall this was an enjoyable journey.

BEST FOR

Access to the impressive Falcon Gold lounges at both Heathrow T4 and Bahrain International Airport – the latter complete with a gaming area and extensive F&B.

PRICE

A return Falcon Gold flight from London to Singapore in March starts from £1,970

CONTACT

gulfair.com

IMAGES COURTESY OF GULF AIR; ALICE HENDERSON

WORDS
HANNAH BRANDLER

Hotel Plaza Athénée, Paris

The Dorchester Collection property dazzles with class and style

What's it like?
This lavish hotel has been a fixture on the uber-fashionable Avenue de Montaigne since 1913. The Haussmannian facade, dotted with bold red awnings and geraniums, rubs shoulders with luxe fashion houses. Guests certainly dress the part, particularly when spotlit by the many chandeliers gracing the halls.

Stretching the eight floors is a legendary grand staircase framed with wrought-iron bannisters. A treasure trove of vintage cabinets, gilded mirrors and *Beauty and the Beast*-like lanterns are revealed as you make the climb up the red-carpeted stairs.

Rooms
There are a total of 208 rooms and suites. No two rooms are the same, but floors are divided by themes – classically Parisian (floors 1-6) or Art Deco (floors 7-8). Views overlook the courtyard or avenue (with a peek round to the Eiffel Tower).

In July 2024, 49 rooms and suites on the fifth and sixth floors were renovated by Moinard Bétaille, featuring new colour palettes (mine was silver and beige) and eco features, while still retaining 18th-century furnishings.

My fifth floor Junior Suite (45 sqm) featured French windows that opened onto the courtyard, with Rapunzel-like turrets and a Virginia creeper plant crawling the walls.

Interior design has drawn inspiration from nature, with plant motifs plus floral details in the marble bathroom.

Also new to the rooms are bedside hand-decorated glass lamps, complementing the decadent chandeliers overhead. Dream-like beds add to the fairytale feel, while a comfy lounge area provides space to unwind in style.

GOOD -TO- KNOW

French actor Jean Gabin asked for his balcony to be decorated with 100 red roses to romance Marlene Dietrich who lived opposite. Since then, the hotel facade has been adorned with 1,900 geraniums.

Facilities
Jean Imbert replaced Alain Ducasse as the hotel's culinary director in 2021. He quickly proved naysayers wrong, receiving a Michelin star just nine weeks after opening the fine dining Jean Imbert au Plaza Athénée restaurant. Here, Imbert showcases forgotten French recipes amid extravagant Versailles-style splendour. Breakfast is also served here, with a vessel of perfect pastries gracing each table.

Le Relais Plaza, meanwhile, revives the hotel's Art Deco heyday. It's a riot of a brasserie, with glitzy interiors, a five-piece band on Thursday nights, and mirrored banquettes that offer a subtle spot for people-watching. Inspired by Imbert's grandmother, the menu features lashings of foie gras, gratins and tartares.

Further venues include the seasonal street-side La Terrasse Montaigne, the contemporary Le Bar, and the all-day dining La Galerie.

For meetings, the hotel has two boardrooms, plus opulent salons and ballrooms for larger events.

The lower ground floor is home to a Dior Spa (see opposite) and fitness centre. **BT**

VERDICT

First-class service and sumptuous renovations ensure this timeless hotel remains a prime spot for those seeking a taste of the suite life.

BEST FOR

A place to see and be seen in the fashion district.

DON'T MISS

Courtyard happenings – from a winter ice rink to summer film soirées.

PRICE
Prices start from €1,650

CONTACT
25 Avenue Montaigne, 75008
Paris; +33 (0) 1 53 67 66 65;
dorchestercollection.com

IMAGES **MASAHIKO TAKEDA; COURTESY OF DORCHESTER COLLECTION**

WORDS
HANNAH BRANDLER

Dior Spa Plaza Athénée, Paris

High-end treatments from an haute couture brand at this glistening city spa

Background
Hotel Plaza Athénée was the logical location for the world's first Dior Spa in 2008, sharing the fashionable Avenue de Montaigne address with the House of Dior.

The space was fully renovated in September 2023 and is equipped with six treatment rooms, a sauna and hammam. We visited to experience the new Dior Light Suite, the only one of its kind in Europe.

Ambience
The spa's luminous design appropriately sets the scene for the array of treatments on offer, while Dior throws and pillows embroidered with wild animals and the brand's Toile de Jouy motif add a chic touch to this subterranean sanctuary.

Superfood-packed juices by Wild & The Moon kick-start the treatment, while the relaxation room (dubbed 'le grand salon') is the perfect spot for unwinding – complete with soothing archways and a water feature.

The treatment
Sleep-deprived after a Stateside trip, I booked in for the Soin de Minuit treatment. This 90-minute facial takes place in the pioneering Dior Light Suite, which has been tailored to synchronise the circadian and chronobiological rhythms through light therapy.

In short, light fluctuates during the treatment to help with your energy levels and sleep patterns. The LED-bejewelled ceiling mimics sunlight to provide the optimum daily amount of light required to boost your energy levels and sleep cycle, while also eliminating signs of fatigue and mitigating against the effects of city pollution and stress – a fitting treatment for a jetlagged business traveller.

The treatment begins with an iPad questionnaire – average sleep duration, bedtime and wake-up time, difficulty with sleep and so on – to determine one of three programmes (recharge, recover or rest) that best suits you. The light intensity then varies depending on the setting. Guests also have a choice of soundtrack – from the natural outdoors (my pick) to jazz or piano instrumentals.

The algorithm landed on the 'rest' programme for my visit, preparing me for a soothing night's sleep. The facial incorporated slow, soothing movements – allowing me to decompress and almost nod off.

At first, I found the room's brightness at odds with the notion of relaxation – I'd more naturally associate dark spaces with rest (my trusty eye mask accompanies me on all my travels), but I soon leaned into the process and it felt surprisingly natural.

My treatment included products from the Dior Prestige range such as a cleansing micellar foam, La Micro-Huile de Rose Activated Serum, plus a restorative night cream.

Also included is a stint in the Dior Skin Light mask, which uses red LED light to boost collagen, reduce sebum, tighten pores and plump your face. **BT**

GOOD-TO-KNOW

Dior now has spas in London, Doha, Dubai, Paris, the Côte d'Azur, as well as onboard the Royal Scotsman in Scotland and the Eastern & Oriental Express.

VERDICT

A rejuvenating sanctuary for the fashionable business traveller. I felt refreshed, with a luminous and more elastic visage to match.

PRICE
The Soin de Minuit treatment costs €380. Advance booking is required.

CONTACT
25 Avenue Montaigne, 75008
Paris, France; +33 1 53 67 65 35;
dorchestercollection.com

IMAGES **MATTHIEU SALVAING; HANNAH BRANDLER**

WORDS
TOM OTLEY

The Reach at Piccadilly, Manchester

Marriott's Tribute Portfolio property shines in the North West of England

What's it like?
The Reach at Piccadilly opened in July 2024 as part of Marriott's upmarket Tribute Portfolio following a £40 million conversion. The 11-storey hotel is located on Ducie Street next to Rochdale Canal, and a three-minute walk to Manchester's Piccadilly train station – which offers free shuttle buses around the city centre.

Interiors by ICA Studio are inspired by pioneering history and the notion of "coming home". There are references to canal side inns, which accommodated boatmen after a long day's work, while details such as locally sourced curved wooden tables and brass edging reminiscent of barges and the interior of boats add subtle hints of quirkiness to the otherwise slick and contemporary decor. There is also plenty of bright, bespoke artwork, influenced by the Rochdale waterways.

Rooms
There are 215 bedrooms and luxury suites over ten floors, ranging from a 'City Cosy' (18-21 sqm) to suites (29-40 sqm). Our double room featured sage green panelled walls, herringbone wooden flooring and textured rugs in earthy colours that added warmth without over-cluttering the compact space. A floor-to-ceiling window along with a glass door offered light and access to a small metal balcony overlooking the next street.

The walk-in shower had sustainable toiletries from local brand Ducie Street Co, while further amenities included Brew Tea Co, a Dualit coffee machine with compostable coffee capsules, an effective hairdryer and a 55-inch TV. The room also included an open wardrobe with hanging space, but no designated workspace – our room had a chair and small table that could be used as such.

Facilities
Lock 84 restaurant takes its name from the number of the lock on the Rochdale canal beside the hotel, which is visible from the window tables. The Rochdale canal took produce not only from the Manchester area but was a connection between produce and materials coming from Liverpool and then on westwards to Sowerby Bridge in Yorkshire and the Aire and Calder Navigation. Delicious sharing plates range from fig and pecan salad to cod loin, roast butternut squash gnocchi and tempura oyster mushroom, and balsamic roast pepper tart. Service was friendly and enthusiastic, with well-informed waiters. Breakfast included a continental-style buffet or an à la carte menu. The hotel also has a small, well-equipped gym. **BT**

VERDICT

A welcoming and stylish hotel close to the centre of the action with great service, well-thought-out design and a comfortable feel to it. A home away from home, indeed.

BEST FOR

Convenience and a waterside view of Manchester's history.

DON'T MISS

The sharing plates at Lock 84 – perfect before heading out for the legendary nightlife.

PRICE
From £138 for a double deluxe with balcony.

CONTACT
7 Ducie St, Manchester M1 2JB; 0 161 383 0033; thereachmcr.com

GOOD-TO-KNOW

The Outlook, a bar with outdoor seating, will open on the eighth floor in 2025.

IMAGES MATTHEW SHAW. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED; ITSMELOUIS.COM

WORDS
JEREMY TAYLOR

Polestar 3

An ultra-stylish design boosts the feelgood factor to ensure Polestar's all-electric SUV is a refreshingly cool drive

Background
Ubiquitous sports utility vehicles from the likes of BMW and Audi are ten a penny in the UK – so what's the leftfield choice for motorists who like to step outside of the mainstream?

The Polestar 3 is a sharp-looking, refined and competitively priced family car offering excellent battery range, lots of standard equipment and a chic but minimalist interior.

What's it like?
Unmistakable on the road, the 3's sculpted bodywork is aerodynamically profiled to optimise airflow – even the paint colours are specially curated to accentuate an ultra-modern design.

The 3 is available in standard form, or as the Performance pack model I drove on launch around Herefordshire. With sporty handling and larger, 22-inch alloy wheels, the most dynamic version in the range is terrific fun.

Features
All launch models feature a twin motor, all-wheel drive set-up to aid grip, and also run on pothole-munching air suspension. A standard 3 will churn out 483bhp from a 111kWh battery pack, with masses of torque for overtaking. Up that by 27bhp for the Performance pack, reducing the 0-60mph time to just 4.5 seconds.

A long-range, dual motor version returns 392 miles on a single charge, or 348 with the Performance pack. The forthcoming single motor option will increase that to 403 miles. Hooked up to a rapid 250kWh charger, the 3 will charge from 10% to 80% in just half an hour.

Inside, a 14.5-inch touchscreen is the nerve centre of the 3, receiving digital updates over-the-air with no need to visit a service centre. Ingenious cabin sensors monitor the interior, warning drivers if they leave a pet or child in the car, while the climate control can be set up to keep animals cool when alone in the cabin. **BT**

GOOD-TO-KNOW

If you want to impress eco-friendly friends, the Polestar 3 is a sustainability superstar – with bio-attributed MicroTech fabric, repurposed aluminium and welfare-secured-wool.

VERDICT

Equipped with a lovely cabin, great looks and a spacious interior, the Polestar 3 is a large electric SUV that offers a more contemporary look than key rivals, such as BMW iX and Mercedes EQE. Handsome and distinctive, this sporty Swedish family-mover is only let down by an over-complicated infotainment system and poor rear visibility.

BEST FOR

Easy urban driving. Switch to one-pedal mode and there's hardly any need to touch the brake. Easing off the accelerator slows the car and uses the recycled energy to charge the battery at the same time.

PRICE
Prices start at just under £70,000 – a relative bargain for such high levels of luxury and refinement.

CONTACT
polestar.com

FROM THE ARCHIVE

Casting an eye back to the heyday of airline clubs

Hannah Brandler looks at the evolution of airline loyalty programmes

OVER THE YEARS we have reported heavily on frequent flyer programmes – from the highs of club launches and consolidated currencies to the disappointments of points devaluation. In light of the BA changes (see pages 9 and 14), we look back to Anthony Perry's '*The clout of the clubs*' feature, published in November 1982, to find out how far these schemes have come (or crumbled).

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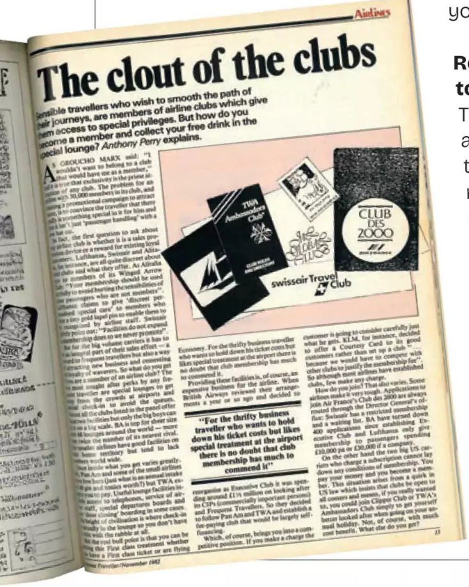
GOOD OLD DAYS Loyalty programmes used to be more exclusive, but there are new opportunities for modern travellers

The age of applications

Back in the 80s, membership to loyalty programmes was more difficult to attain – and therefore more exclusive. Most required applications and several also incurred fees. "Applications to join Air France's Club des 2000 are always routed through the Director General's office: Swissair has a restricted membership and a waiting list. BA have turned down 400 applications since establishing Executive Club, and Lufthansa only give membership to passengers spending £10,000 pa," states the article. BA's Executive Club, meanwhile, charged £55 for the application and required travellers to provide at least £12,000 worth of business.



Airlines
TWA Ambassadors Club
CLUB DES 2000
swissair Travel Club

The clout of the clubs

Sensible travellers who wish to smooth the path of their journeys, are members of airline clubs which give them access to special privileges. But how do you become a member and collect your free drink in the special lounge? *Anthony Perry* explains.

"For the thrifty business traveller who wants to hold down his ticket costs but likes special treatment at the airport there is no doubt that club membership has much to commend it"

It's a marked difference from 2025, where you can register for free and instantly receive a membership number. Everyone and their (digital-savvy) grandparents have joined – you might even forget all the ones you're signed up to.

Recognition is victim to oversubscription

The main challenge for airlines – "to convince the traveller that there really is something special in it for him" – began in the 80s and has been heightened due to the sheer volume of members. In airlines' defence, today's world is far more connected, and passenger numbers are reaching record highs. Where flying was once an expensive pursuit, today it's a more affordable prospect thanks to low-cost carriers.

The downside is the loss of exclusivity. Loyalty programmes have become commodified and lost their special sparkle. After all, cabin crew remembering you and greeting you by name is near impossible when your club has thousands of members. Lufthansa loyalists were once gifted a "tiny gold label pin" so they stood out. Today, you'll be lucky to nab a seat in a lounge.

The pros of being loyal are also no longer airline exclusive. BA first enticed members by including "a personal and medical insurance package", but this is now a mainstay of most credit card offerings. Lounge access was once only feasible via airlines, but visit an airport today and you can pay for facilities.

That said, opportunities have grown in some areas. Historically, travellers would only sign up to flag carrier schemes. Alliances such as oneworld, SkyTeam and Star Alliance, however, allow you to earn and burn across various airlines – speeding up status recognition.

Loyalty currencies, too, are being consolidated. Avios can be earned across several airlines – the latest to join is Loganair – while Miles+More has 35 airline partners. The value of such currencies is also no longer limited to air travel, but can be redeemed on land. Avios, for instance, can be converted into Nectar points for your supermarket shop.

Points enthusiasts will, however, remark on devaluation, with the number of points/miles needed to travel from A to B increasing, while transfer ratios continually drop. And forget about the notion of a free flight, with taxes and surcharges sometimes as costly as a sale ticket.

Rooted in revenue

The main change, and one that's here to stay, is the move to revenue-based rewards and redemptions. Those that game the system will find it more challenging to achieve or retain status. Of course, we can complain about such changes, but perhaps we've taken membership for granted. Fewer members may lead to greater personalisation and, if it's for the few rather than the many, isn't that – rightly or wrongly – at the core of clubs? As cited by Perry, let's revisit Groucho Marx's stance: "I wouldn't want to belong to a club that would have me as a member." **BT**

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